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## **The Aesthetic Will**

### **Time, Transcendence and the Transcendental Imagination in Romantic and Existential Thought**

Plant, Daniel

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King's College London

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*Time, Transcendence and the Transcendental Imagination in Romantic and Existential Thought*

**Author:**Daniel Plant

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Daniel Plant  
Ph. D. in Philosophical Theology, 2013

**THE AESTHETIC WILL**

*Time, Transcendence and the Transcendental  
Imagination in  
Romantic and Existential Thought*

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to my supervisors, Professors Paul Janz and Ben Quash, and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for full funding of my Ph.D. research. Thanks to Dom; thanks to Dad.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis, argues for the theological viability of Coleridge's ontological insight into artworks and natural phenomena as aesthetically intimate of transcendence. However this finding is dependent on a critical analysis of Coleridge's work, separating poetical insights from a systematic context which works against their theological promise. This Coleridgean analysis is in turn dependent, philosophically, upon a critical examination of a variety of Kantian and post-Kantian texts, through which is derived an account of pre-conceptual imaginative process, as related to a Bergsonian account of time considered as an organically non-calculable structure, in light of a Kierkegaardian theological norm.

I discern a tension running through Coleridge's work between the insights of the poet and the ambitions of the post-Kantian metaphysician. I argue that this tension is subversive of Coleridge's underlying religious and poetic motivations. Through an analysis of Coleridge's thought in both its systematic and less formal, aesthetic tendencies, I extricate his claim for the aesthetic intimation of transcendence through nature and art from the post-Kantian systematic conceptuality through which Coleridge is often led to distort it, in a countervailing drive towards systematically complete explanation.

The thought of Kierkegaard will serve to illumine the ethico-aesthetic dynamics of Coleridge's account of the appropriation of transcendent insight, conceived as an event of the dawning of religious truth as a conceptually indeterminate imaginative process, which as such, is only accessible to an imaginative and participative receptivity on the part of the aesthetic subject. A similar, imaginative ethos is discerned in the aesthetic positions of Coleridge and Kierkegaard; an attentive humility in openness to the potential manifestation of genuinely creative alterity. Through this thesis, the theological claim is advanced, in a new way, that in the eyes of Christian faith, an intimation of transcendence can be interpreted as a glimpse of the everyday world as created, an encounter with the familiar in its own ecstatic otherness.

## **Introduction**

Although this thesis is aimed primarily at an analysis of divergent tendencies in the thought of Coleridge, I argue that the damaging effect of this tension, which amounts to a conflict of differing theological and philosophical allegiances, can only be properly understood by a contextualising examination of Coleridge's work in light of the post-Kantian thought-world which he inhabited. An analysis of Kierkegaard's existential reaction to that thought-world will in turn helpfully illumine the nature of the particular, ethical role of imagination which I discern in aspects of Coleridge's aesthetic thought. Through a reading of Coleridge's aesthetic insights thus informed, I justify my claim for a problematic tension between Coleridge's systematic theorising, and the theological promise of the conceptually indeterminate, aesthetically mediated religious experience on which such systematic construction is based. Thus it shall be suggested that the idealist logic fuelling Coleridge's drive towards complete systematicity works against his own existential insight, as both a poet and a Christian, into the role of art in the intimation of transcendence. In light of these developments, my thesis aims to demonstrate the theological viability of Coleridge's ontological claim that artworks and natural phenomena may intimate an awareness of transcendence, when this claim is extricated from the post-Kantian idealist conceptuality in which it is ensnared.

An account of pre-conceptual imaginative process (drawing on Kant), in relation to an account of time considered as an organically non-calculable structure (drawing on Bergson) functions as an explanatory context in which Kantian and post-Kantian texts are critically examined. This focal explanatory context serves to orientate a complex argument, and on this basis original positions are advanced.

A variety of texts are addressed – epistemological, metaphysical and aesthetic – exploring their theological implications in relation to my thesis goal, to show the theological viability of Coleridge's poetic insights into the ethico-aesthetic discernment of transcendence, once separated from the counteracting tendency of his systematic post-Kantian metaphysics. The original conclusion is reached that Coleridge's account of aesthetic symbolism, once separated from the damaging systematic metaphysical context in which he often attempts to contain it, depends on similar imaginative practices to those at work in Kierkegaard's use of indirect communication to promote personal engagement with paradoxical revelation.

In terms of its overarching orientation, this thesis seeks to draw attention to an antagonism between two broad philosophical motivations in post-Kantian philosophy. I draw attention to a

difficulty in harmonising the demands of formal logical rigour with a perception of the potentially infinite fecundity of conceptually indeterminate aesthetic productivity. I find reason to suggest that this disturbing tension of opposing tendencies first becomes manifest in the work of Kant himself, as the aesthetic insights of the *Critique of Judgement* are shown to sit uneasily within the formal architectonic constraints laid down in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

In relation to the work of Schelling, I then show how an appeal is made to a free act of intellectual intuition in terms of polar self-productivity, or infinite self-objectification, in order to try to do justice the demands both of the ontological content and the epistemologically constructed form of experience. Thus in Schelling, as in Hegel, logic is itself polarised and made 'dynamic' in order to try to account for and thus contain the counteracting demands of dynamics and form. This tension between content and form, between logic and actuality, will be shown at its most glaring in the work of Coleridge; I suggest in chapters six and seven that Coleridge's existentially rich poetic and theological vision is in effect betrayed by his countervailing urge towards post-Kantian logical systematicity.

Thus I detect a damaging tension between the demands of comprehensive systematicity on the one hand, and a concern with performativity or existential dynamics on the other, in the post-Kantian philosophy which developed in response to Kant's critical epistemological project. In light of this overarching problematic, I argue that despite the theological failings of his more thoroughly systematic work, Coleridge's less formally driven aesthetic thinking successfully unites a promising tendency in Kantian aesthetics – stressing the imagination's conceptually indeterminate productivity – with an imaginative and participatory, or existential approach to the discernment and appropriation of ethical truth, similar in some respects to that pervading the pseudonymous authorship of Kierkegaard.

I begin an analysis of the conceptual contours of this problem of divergent formal and dynamic priorities in the first two chapters, by suggesting that even the existentially oriented and anti-Hegelian thought of Kierkegaard can be read as constrained unnecessarily by the formalism governing his account of existential 'spheres'. While Kierkegaard justifiably denies that mere logic can form a bridge between the states of unbelief and revealed Christian faith, I suggest that Kierkegaard less justifiably denies a role for conceptually indeterminate artistic activity in the intimation of transcendent creativity. It is in this regard that my account of Coleridge, as informed by Henri Bergson's dynamically 'anti-Kantian' conception of time, is important. I shall argue in chapter seven that – once stripped of the procrustean constraints of a polar logical scheme – Coleridge's poetically and religiously motivated aesthetics moves in the direction of a conceptually indeterminate intimation of transcendence that is itself a revelation of Createdness.

Coleridge points to the perception of divine creativity through the receptive and attentive activity of poetic imagination.

In chapter six, I argue that Coleridge's systematic philosophy is unacceptable on theological grounds. Dialectical or polar logic pre-determines the relation of the created to the divine, as based on an all encompassing concept of absolute power from which Coleridge's trinitarian God and creaturely existences are both derived, in differentiated identity. Here conceptual form replaces an ethico-aesthetic attentiveness to the possibility of conceptually uncontainable revelation. Coleridge's post-Kantian logic thus acts, in effect, as a conceptual idol, a false ultimate. However, in chapter seven I argue that in his aesthetic thinking, Coleridge conceives the aesthetic relation of subject and object in terms of an imaginative mediation through which disinterested attentiveness to the object for its own sake, or in its own alterity, enables the corrigible perception of a shared, creative derivation of both subject and object: of both the form and the content of experience. This intrinsically relational derivation is also an infinitely open-ended, processive intimation of the divine as an incalculable 'telos', through aesthetic symbolisation. The aesthetic intimation of such relatedness might be taken as a created echo of trinitarian relatedness. Createdness is experienced as a process of divine self-giving that is, paradoxically, also the empowerment of the creature. Such an incalculable awareness of creative process cannot be reduced to the conceptual determinations of post-Kantian polar logic.

### **Overview of chapters**

My theological norm in this thesis is provided by Kierkegaard's account of paradoxical faith, in *Philosophical Fragments* and the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, which I address in chapters one and two, especially with regard to the role of imagination in the life of faith. However – and echoing my concern with the logical formalism of Coleridge's systematically conceptualised philosophy – in my first two chapters I argue that for reasons of internal coherence, Kierkegaard's denial of a role to artistic or 'outward' aesthetic activity in the movement to the existential sphere of paradoxical faith is problematic. I have been suggesting that a distortion of Coleridge's conceptually fluid aesthetic intuitions is caused by the theoretical form in which he is inclined to cast them; in my first two chapters I suggest that a similar resistance to formal and artificially imposed constraints is arguably discernible in Kierkegaard's thought concerning the relation of faith to aesthetics. However, I will go on to show, in my final chapter, that just as Kierkegaardian thinking affords insight into Coleridge's religiously motivated aesthetics, thus aiding in distinguishing it from Coleridge's more systematic constructions, so, by the same token, a role for the aesthetics of art and natural beauty in the life of faith can be shown to be fully in accord with a Kierkegaardian conception of faith.

In chapter three, I begin to focus on the nature of the nature of time, regarded as a transcendental condition of experience from a Kantian and post-Kantian perspective: a temporal emphasis that is common to romanticism, idealism and the Kierkegaardian existentialism which responds to both. In the thesis as a whole, I investigate different accounts of time because the dynamic conceptual indeterminacy I detect in Coleridge's thinking needs to be theorised in terms of a suitably dynamic account of temporal movement. For this reason I give an account of Kantian epistemology in chapter three, focusing upon the imaginative construal of time as central to Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories. Through this focus, I situate and highlight the theme of productive imagination, which will play an important role as my thesis progresses.

An account of Kantian and post-Kantian teleology and aesthetics is offered in chapter four, as providing the rationale behind a romantic doctrine of intimate access to transcendence through aesthetic symbolism. This discussion of the dynamics of aesthetic imaginative *process* leads to a critical comparison of post-Kantian (Schellingian) and Bergsonian concepts of time. Bergsonian duration is shown to be more promising than Kantian models on theological grounds: as resistant to conceptual determination, temporal process conceived as duration is thereby shown to accord with a paradoxical or Kierkegaardian concept of revelation. The temporal thus serves as a theological criterion of distinction between panentheistic determinism (as represented by Schellingian, post-Kantian idealism) and Bergson's concept of a metaphysical process that is open-ended and intelligible only through imaginative conceptual indeterminacy (as defined in Kantian aesthetic terms).

In chapter five, I analyse the structure of Kantian productive imagination, as introduced in chapter three. I argue that Bergson's problematic concept of intellectual intuition is best understood in terms of Kantian aesthetic indeterminacy, which is itself now to be understood more fundamentally in terms of an imaginative activity which is inextricably also an ethical receptivity. This latter concept of Kantian imagination as fundamentally an ethico-epistemological structure is discovered in light of findings gained concerning the nature of organism, in chapter four, as these relate to the findings of chapter two concerning Kierkegaard's ethical 'imagination of inwardness'.

In chapter two, it was discovered that Kierkegaardian imagination mediates between poles of experience in terms of metaphorical tension, enabling a paradoxical – and ethically structured – imaginative active-receptivity to the supervention of conceptually incalculable, revelatory insight. This Kierkegaardian model is opposed to the trajectories of those post-Kantian dialectical methods which envision the imaginative mediation of temporal process in terms of a

calculable, Kantian teleology, thereby claiming to achieve absolute knowledge through the reconciliation of polar, metaphysical concepts. In chapter five, I now argue that the structure of Kant's transcendental imaginative activity is organic, and thus categorically unaccountable, in terms of Kant's own model of organism, in a way unacknowledged by Kant. On this account, I suggest that Kant's productive imagination grounds experience in a conceptually paradoxical manner, and is thus at least potentially reconcilable with the 'inward' imaginative criteria pertaining to Kierkegaard's paradoxical revelation. On this basis, I advance in my search for an account of artistic imagination (or in Kierkegaardian terms, 'external' aesthetics), which might be compatible with Kierkegaard's own, paradoxical understanding of Christian revelation.

Kantian, post-Kantian and Bergsonian investigations into the conceptually irreducible structures of time and imagination lead to the discussion, over the next two chapters, of a romantic poet and aesthetician who is also a profound Christian thinker: S. T. Coleridge. On the same temporal-philosophical and theological grounds as hitherto, I criticise Coleridge's systematic philosophical theology, and provide an existential criterion for distinguishing his poetic and aesthetic work from his systematic activity.

In chapter six, I give an account of essential features of Coleridge's metaphysics, demonstrating both how they follow and how they differ from a Schellingian, post-Kantian model. On the basis of these distinctions, I am able to differentiate between what I characterise as Coleridge's 'existential' metaphysical insights and the formal, objective treatment to which he submits such insights in his more systematic work. I offer a 'Bergsonian' critique of the calculable, meontological presuppositions of Coleridge's systematic metaphysics, as bound up with the 'spatialising' tendency of Coleridge's essentially Kantian and teleological understanding of time. In chapter seven some original positions are arrived at. I address Coleridge's poetic vision in terms of a romantic aesthetic of intimated transcendence, showing through textual evidence that Coleridge's aesthetic approach, when in non-systematic mode, accords with a standpoint of Kierkegaardian faith. I show Coleridge's symbolic doctrine of the sublime, and his own aesthetic practice, to be rooted in a concern for the nature of biblical poetics. I further show that Coleridge's accounts of personal aesthetic experience in relation to transcendence are predicated on an imaginatively dis-possessive, or *ethico-aesthetic* awareness of temporal indeterminacy as a genuine, and thus theologically significant, creative process. Thus I present, through my last chapter, a new approach to Coleridge's account of the aesthetics of art and natural beauty that harmonises more with Kierkegaard's later understanding of Christian faith, than with the theologically unacceptable demands of post-Kantian system-building.



# I

## Aesthetics, Transcendence and Kierkegaardian Faith

### Introduction

Chapters one and two represent an analysis of Søren Kierkegaard's position with regard to imaginative activity. The context and progression of the current chapter shall be indicated in this introductory section, with reference to the conclusions to be drawn in the next concerning a problem relating to Kierkegaardian aesthetic practice and theory. With reference to 'The Immediate Erotic Stages or The Musical Erotic' (*Either/Or* part 1)<sup>1</sup> this chapter will suggest that Kierkegaard's criticism of the 'aesthetic' or natural, pre-ethical sphere of existence takes two fronts. Kierkegaard writes against a rationalistic objectivity that excludes ethical inwardness (focusing on G.W.F. Hegel's idealism) and also against an infinitely restless aesthetic subjectivity, without commitment to any definite values, as epitomised in Friedrich Schlegel's account of romantic irony. It is argued that Kierkegaard exposes the ethical problems facing both viewpoints, ultimately in relation to his own, radical conception of Christian existence.

Against Schlegel's egoistic and implicitly nihilistic version of romanticism, this chapter argues that Kierkegaard has to censure the absolutisation of the creative, imaginative subject, as essentially an escapist device designed to avoid the ethical problems and demands with which reality confronts the individual. Against Hegel, I shall suggest that Kierkegaard asserts the necessary role of imagination in ethical life. Then, with reference to the passage of aesthetic reflection on Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, in *Either/Or*, I shall begin to argue that aesthetic awareness, in the form of imaginative activity, plays an inwardly reflective role in the life of Christian faith, as Kierkegaard perceives it.

On this basis, in the next chapter I shall significantly deepen my analysis of Kierkegaard's conceptually paradoxical account of Christian life, especially concerning the role of imagination in faithful receptivity to revelation. I will then progress to a consideration of what I discern to be an important problem facing Kierkegaard's negative theological judgement of the outwardly, (i.e., communicatively) oriented aesthetics of artistic expression, as well as a related, aesthetic receptivity to the significance of natural beauty. In these developments, I shall be building on my analysis, in this current chapter, of the difference between such outwardly, or externally oriented aesthetics and an inwardly focused, or subjective and ethically reflective, aesthetic

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<sup>1</sup> I shall generally refer to this passage simply as 'The Musical Erotic'. *Either/Or* 2 parts, in H.V. & E.H. Hong (ed. & tr.), *Kierkegaard's Writings* (IV), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).



consciousness, as Kierkegaard envisages this. As a conclusion to my treatment of Kierkegaard, in chapter two, I shall suggest that Kierkegaard's own theological communication of Christian inwardness necessarily depends on outward-looking, conceptually indirect, aesthetic activity. Yet Kierkegaard will be shown formally or theoretically to deny any role for outwardly focused, artistic imaginative expression within the life of Christian faith through his account of the different spheres of existence, as conceived in terms of radically separated aesthetic, ethical, and religiously paradoxical life-orientations.

Having established this problematic through chapters one and two, the remainder of this thesis builds towards an attempt, in chapter seven, to show the theoretical compatibility of Kierkegaard's own aesthetic communication of theological paradox with a certain kind of theologically-motivated aesthetic of art and natural beauty, as discernible in the work of Coleridge. My ultimate aim, therefore, is directed towards an aesthetic theory which can accommodate Kierkegaard's own theoretically unaccounted-for aesthetic practice.

Thus in this work I shall be differentiating between what I dub a Coleridgean, or ethico-aesthetic romanticism – as an account of artistic and natural aesthetics in harmony with Kierkegaard's practice of aesthetically indirect theological communication – and the kind of ultimately nihilistic, escapist flights into egoism, which this chapter will show to be typified by Schlegel's romantic irony. While the grounds for this distinction of romanticisms are not those famously indicated by Arthur O. Lovejoy<sup>2</sup>, yet I would agree with Lovejoy that thoroughly divergent ideas, emphases and motives have come to be labelled romantic, and thus that an unqualified use of the term can only lead to confusion. I would therefore make it clear from the outset that my own understanding of the term 'romantic' is a development to be introduced in the final chapter, on the basis of explorations carried out in earlier chapters. This understanding of romanticism is restricted to a particular doctrine of aesthetic symbolism, drawn from Coleridge, as analysed in relation to the thought of Kierkegaard, Kant, Schelling and Bergson. I will be claiming that such aesthetic symbolism is in essence a process demanding imaginatively ethical subjective attentiveness, in order to mediate conceptually indeterminable intimations of transcendence. In intervening chapters the word 'romantic' will however be assigned, as is customary, to notable historical positions, such as Schlegel's and Wackenroder's.

Subsequent chapters should make clear that Coleridge's aesthetic thinking builds, critically, on (and against) Kant's accounts of beauty and organic structure, as found in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. In chapters six and seven, I critically assess Coleridge's work in light of

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<sup>2</sup> See Lovejoy's 'On the Discrimination of Romanticisms', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 39: 2 (1924), pp. 229-253.

other findings relating to Kant's productive imagination<sup>3</sup>, as well as Henri Bergson's concept of a durational *élan vital*.<sup>4</sup> I oppose Coleridgean romanticism (on the same Kantian and Bergsonian grounds) to what I would term 'pseudo-romanticism'<sup>5</sup>, as epitomised in Friedrich Schlegel's *Athanaeum Fragments*, a writer whom I address in the present chapter from the viewpoint of Kierkegaardian faith<sup>6</sup>. In this present chapter, I suggest that it is this latter, Schlegelian sense that Kierkegaard, following Hegel, seems to understand the term romanticism in general; that it is against such an understanding that both Kierkegaard and Hegel uphold their (highly divergent) ethical positions.

In this thesis as a whole, I question the divorce of outwardly aesthetic expression from faith, as demanded by Kierkegaard, as not only inconsistent (as making for the incoherence of his own strategy of indirect communication), but also insofar as the divorce of faith from art and its appreciation, and the appreciation of natural beauty, is based on inadequate grounds of assessment. I shall argue as this thesis develops that Kierkegaard's critique of art from the perspective of faith is justified and effective only against what I have just characterised, above, as a pseudo-romantic aesthetic model.

In pursuit of these aims, I commence now by turning to Kierkegaard's theological strategy of conceptually indeterminate, or aesthetically indirect, ethical communication.

### **(1) The life of authentic faith: Kierkegaard's project of indirect communication**

Kierkegaard saw Socrates' ethical attitude as exemplifying the subjective relation to truth.<sup>7</sup> Although eternity infinitely transcends time in value, if one is honestly interested in the eternal value of goodness, one is ethically bound to use one's time in its interests, 'accenting' one's inward existence ethically, rather than identifying oneself with the 'timeless paragraphs of systematic philosophy'.<sup>8</sup> One should be passionate about goodness as something to strive for in one's life, rather than about the theory of goodness as an abstract hypothesis. In objective

<sup>3</sup> See chapter 3, section 3.

<sup>4</sup> See chapter 4, section 1.

<sup>5</sup> Following Charles Williams: see appendix 1.

<sup>6</sup> Oskar Walzel, in his *German Romanticism*, (Alma Elise Lussky (tr.) (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), pp. 41-48; 70-75) differentiates between earlier and later phases in Schlegel's thought in the closing years of the eighteenth century. A first phase, influenced by Fichte, (not counting an initial classicism) is focused on irony and protean wit, as intellectual intuition of subjectivity's infinite source makes the poet aware of his inability as a finite ego ever to express the truth for which he strives. A later, monistic phase, is influenced by Schelling and Schleiermacher (as expressed in Schlegel's third collection of fragments or *Ideen*). In this later phase, romantic striving or yearning, recognised as love, finds its source in a more organically inclusive concept of an Absolute regarded as embracing while transcending both subjectivity and objectivity. Such infinite love is made symbolically manifest as the spiritualised sentiment pervading romantic poetry and above all, music. As we shall discover in chapters six and seven, while there is much of this latter approach in Coleridge's aesthetic, through the influence predominately of Schelling, it is importantly modified by his Christian theological interests, especially through his early concern to understand the distinctive poetics of the Old Testament.

<sup>7</sup> James Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 153.

<sup>8</sup> Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, p. 152.

passion of the latter sort one evades responsibility, by-passing the irksome fact that temporal becoming is prone to error, and always uncertain. We are never finished, as living subjects, and thus cannot have any certainty of how we stand at any given time in relation to goodness. Our temporal situation is essentially uncertain. Only with necessary truths of reason is certainty possible, but these are a-temporal, hypothetical. Thus to identify oneself with such *a priori* objects of thought is to seek to avoid real life. It is much more flattering to believe one possesses goodness certainly, that is to say, objectively, but this is like knowing the anatomical moves that enable one to swim, while being frightened to enter the water. Knowledge of natation does not make one a swimmer, just as being a philosophical ethicist does not make one good. One may only ever strive for goodness by attempting to appropriate it in and as the 'shape' of one's personal life in interaction with others.

In Kierkegaard's conceptually indirect or indeterminate writings, behind Socratic irony and a maieutic method 'lay a personal regard for the truth, not only as an objective thesis, but also as a motivating, practical principle which should make a difference to one's life'.<sup>9</sup> Kierkegaard's paramount concern is for the manner in which his hearers relate themselves to the truth and are modified by it in their way of life. Hence he communicates indirectly, so as to provoke the learner's own appropriative effort. Kierkegaard encourages the reader to begin to discern and 'inhabit' ideas as personal possibilities, realising that it is up to the individual whether he chooses to realise the existential possibilities thus inwardly entertained, or not.<sup>10</sup>

The idea of making what has become despised and over-familiar strange again, thereby refreshing one's awareness of it, hearing the old with the shock of the new, or seeing the customary in an altered and subversive light, was taken up within the Modernist aesthetic movement in the twentieth century (for example, in the poetry of T. S. Eliot).<sup>11</sup> Values dismissed as trite or to which, at best, lip-service is paid for the sake of appearances, only appear inapt and *passé* insofar as they are not grasped authentically in their intrinsic significance, independently of the inherited vehicle of an out-worn and over-familiar mode of expression. Ethical and religious signifiers in a complex modern society have become separated from their significance, and so Kierkegaard's task, like the modernist poet's, is to reacquaint us with what we think we already know, but have never engaged with authentically for ourselves. Most of us relate merely passively, (i.e., objectively or externally) to ethical and religious meanings, as if to so much cultural wall-paper, rather than relating to them as a task for personal realisation through living appropriation. Christian truth is only genuinely

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<sup>9</sup> Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, p.152.

<sup>10</sup> Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, p.152.

<sup>11</sup> See Mary Karr, 'Introduction' to Eliot's *The Waste Land*, in *The Waste Land and Other Writings*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), p. xxiii.

communicated for Kierkegaard in its 'how', in the manner of its expression.<sup>12</sup> The words of faith themselves can be said glibly enough, but then they are merely empty forms, *flatus vocis*, and not the content of faith: not 'faith-full' words. Such words, such forms, need to be re-inhabited, in a living relation of a qualitatively different kind.

As we progress through this and the next chapter, I will show how Kierkegaard's account of the dynamics of such a faithful response involves imaginative, aesthetic activity. It will be shown that Kierkegaard's approach characterises Christian faithfulness in terms of an imaginatively tensile and intrinsically paradoxical interaction between infinitely indeterminable revelation and finite interpretation, between interpretive activity and attentive receptivity to the divine as non-objective, or that which transcends the subject-object relation as 'wholly other'.

Thomas Carlyle took up a similar concern over outworn symbolism in his book *Sartor Resartus* (The Tailor re-Tailored).<sup>13</sup> Carlyle, however, draws on an approach to the issue of the recovery of transcendent ethical meaning on the basis of an idealist, dialectical harmonisation of opposites, rather than through the indirect communication of a conceptually irreducible, ultimate paradox. Such an approach, as yet another variant of romanticism, will be critically addressed in chapters four to seven.<sup>14</sup>

In pursuit of his policy of cognitively indirect communication, Kierkegaard will not expound as a teacher, objectively or dogmatically. Rather he employs a maieutic, Socratic method. This means that like a midwife, Kierkegaard wants to enable the reader to 'give birth' to his own, authentic understanding of existential possibilities, by writing in such a way that the reader is forced to do a lot of interpretive work, to hold the truth as something he has himself discovered through the ambiguous promptings of the text. The individual must form his own judgement. William McDonald describes Kierkegaard's stylistic approach as exhibiting an 'incessant play of irony, a predilection for paradox and semantic opacity. The text becomes a polished surface

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<sup>12</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* 2 vols., in H. V & E. H. Hong (ed. & tr.), *Kierkegaard's Writings* (XII), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), vol. 1, p. 202.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Carlyle, K. McSweeney & P. Sabor (ed.), *Sartor Resartus*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

<sup>14</sup> For Carlyle, nature can submit to conceptual calculation as a mirror of its reductive programme, or it can function as a symbolic window on a deeper, qualitatively irreducible dimension of reality. The same reality that can be calculated can reveal itself to an ethically rejuvenated approach as a creative miracle, as miraculously dynamic as the freedom of the will. Nature is thus itself described as supernatural, but for Carlyle, this deeper meaning in nature is only open to purified feeling, and can never be known systematically. The Kantian subjective forms of space and time (see chapter three, below), in which the epistemologically relative, causal order of phenomena is clad, are regarded by Carlyle as veils hiding a natural miracle of dynamic creativity. A revelation of a 'thing in itself', in Kant's terms, is possible, only what is revealed is not a thing, but of the same order as human will: a living power in nature, or *natura naturans*, as opposed to its product, the 'dead' phenomenal order, or *natura naturata* (for more on this distinction, see my treatment of Schelling in chapter four). Phenomena are regarded from one perspective as a deceptive veil, concealing a living kinship with nature, but also as potential symbols, capable of disclosing their creative ground. But for Carlyle, as for Kierkegaard, traditional Christian symbols have lost their force to reveal the living Being of beings.

for the reader in which the prime meaning to be discerned is the reader's own reflection'.<sup>15</sup> But this assessment must be qualified.

As we shall see later in this chapter, in the indirect writings of ethical and religious significance (for example, those ascribed to the pseudonymous 'Judge William' or 'Johannes Climacus'), the 'reader's own reflection' should not be an eisegesis of the text, an interpretation dependent only on subjective taste – the aesthetical absolutisation of the ego's interpretive activity, as is exemplified in the very position Kierkegaard attacks, Friedrich Schlegel's 'romantic irony' (to which we turn next). Rather what is called for is an attentively engaged, subjectively concerned exegesis of truth.

In relation to Kierkegaard's conception of Christian faith as a living 'exegetical' pilgrimage, as it were, or mode of life born of a responsive relation to Christ, it will be shown in the next chapter that such a faithful response is neither subjectively active nor passive, purely. Rather it is conceived as a receptive re-activity to incalculable revelation, through an imaginative mediation – without conceptual reconciliation – of the finite and the infinite poles of Christian experience.

## **(2) Friedrich Schlegel's aesthetics of ironic self-transcendence as indirect communication**

As just noted, and as outlined in this chapter's introduction, Kierkegaard shares with Hegel a disparagement of Friedrich Schlegel's romantic aesthetics. Hegel perceives a misuse of Fichte's post-Kantian conception of the absolute ego as constitutive of all objective significance. For Schlegel, as Hegel sees him, perhaps unjustly, the empirical self posits all values, and thus cannot seriously regard them as binding. Hegel writes of the consequent evacuation of all true significance from objective positions:

The proximate form of this negativity which displays itself as irony is, then, on the one hand the futility of all that is matter of fact, or moral and of substantive import in itself; the nothingness of all that is objective, and that has essential and actual value.<sup>16</sup>

What for Fichte is an intellectual intuition of absolute subjectivity as an ontologically simple and transcendent source of objective reality, is seen by Schlegel as an aesthetic intuition which informs a process of infinite self-manifestation through the aesthetic activity of the poet: a process of realisation of the undifferentiated ground of the artist's subjectivity which, as infinite

<sup>15</sup> McDonald, William, "Søren Kierkegaard, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2006 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2006/entries/kierkegaard/>. Date accessed, 4/8/2006.

<sup>16</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, Bernard Bosanquet (tr.) (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 72.

or absolute, cannot in principle come to an end.<sup>17</sup> The poet, on account of his genius, is aesthetically aware of his own infinite ground, inspired to celebrate and explore his own infinite truth through the aesthetic self-creation that is the process of poetic activity itself.<sup>18</sup> But the poet must simultaneously distance himself from the fruits of his inspiration. The poetic form of his life, his aesthetic productivity, is the focus of the romantic poet, rather than the poetry he writes. One thinks here of Byron's aesthetic journey – self-discovery as self-invention – through the reflective cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.<sup>19</sup> For Schlegel, the romantic poet must show an awareness that the infinite ground of his subjectivity is the true aesthetic content of his work, by embodying a self-conscious, critical distance within the very fabric of his poetry *qua* finite product. The individual can intuit his absolute ground, his ultimate metaphysical significance, and he can intimate it, inadequately, in a necessarily endless process of poetic self-activity; but he can never arrive at a finite knowledge of himself *sub specie aeterni*, as no determinate cognition can contain the infinite. Romantic poetry is therefore a self-critical, self-distancing reflection upon its own activity. The focus rests on the creative subject rather than his products, and is always cast in the form of infinite yearning for a necessarily unattainable goal: absolute wholeness.<sup>20</sup>

Schlegel holds that the manifestation of the absolute is impossible save in fragmentary intimations or pointers, which must simultaneously be disclaimed as finite.<sup>21</sup> No ethical position can be objectively certain, therefore, which leads Hegel to disapprove of the inevitable nihilistic tendency of romantic-ironic detachment.<sup>22</sup> Hegel sees the lifestyle of the romantic poet as culminating in an impasse, in what Kierkegaard would regard as despair:

All appears [to the poetic ego] as nothing worth and futile, excepting its own subjectivity, which thereby becomes hollow and empty, and itself mere conceit. But on the other hand, the reverse may happen, and the 'I' may also find itself unsatisfied in its enjoyment of itself, and may prove insufficient to itself, so as in consequence to feel a craving for the solid and substantial, for determinate and essential interests.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Friedrich Schlegel, 'Athenaeum Fragments', Fragment 116, in *Philosophical Fragments*, P. Firchow (tr.) R. Gasché, (intro.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> It becomes clear here how Kierkegaard conceives the infinite, ethical task of striving to become oneself as a reaction to these romantic ideas of aesthetic self-poesis.

<sup>19</sup> See J. J. McGann's introduction, pp. xxii-xxiii, xxvii, and endnote, p. 1026, to 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage', in McGann (ed.), *Lord Byron: The Major Works*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 18-206.

<sup>20</sup> See 'Introduction', J. M. Bernstein (tr. & intro.), *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. xxvii, xxx-xxxiii; Walzel, *German Romanticism*, pp. 22-25, 42-46; Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 31, xiii-xv, xxx-xi.

<sup>21</sup> See Friedrich Schlegel, 'On Incomprehensibility', in *Classic and Romantic German Aesthetics*, pp. 297-308.

<sup>22</sup> As developed by Nietzsche, perhaps the seeds of some strands of post-modern thought are already latent in the epistemological and ethical implications of the aesthetics of romantic irony.

<sup>23</sup> Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, p. 72.

The absolute is a necessarily non-manifest deity for romantics such as Schlegel.<sup>24</sup> The poetic ironist can be pre-conceptually aware of the infinite ground of his creativity, and can intimate this awareness through the indeterminacy of aesthetic forms.<sup>25</sup> But since the aesthetic intimations of romantic artistry are embodied in finite forms, the absolute is always a presence-in-absence; through such romantic-ironic artworks, one is supposedly awakened to an awareness of the divine in the form of an infinite yearning for that which necessarily eludes manifestation.

In much of his pseudonymous work, (for example, in *Philosophical Fragments*), I suggest that Kierkegaard uses a romantic-ironic style reminiscent of Schlegel's, but for a very different reason. Schlegel aims to intimate a creative ground that is un-manifest by the standard of rational necessity, and to display critical awareness of the inadequacy of his finite attempt to communicate the infinite by adopting a stance of ironic detachment from his work. Kierkegaard, as will be seen, aims to communicate the possibility of ethical commitment to an adequate and salvific revelation of the infinite God: the mortal man, Jesus.

Kierkegaard's ironic style is thus deliberately deceptive. By attracting the 'aesthetic', educated reader with the offer of a sophisticated and sparkling intellectual entertainment, free of all the slow-paced trammels and demands of seriousness and commitment, Kierkegaard is at the same time indirectly inviting him to perceive the opposite for himself: opening a vista towards the possibility of embracing a Christian way of life as his own. Thus a maieutic, or Socratic-ironic strategy hopes to assist an inner openness to truth through a *tour de force* display of lightly-worn and detached erudition in the fashionable mode of romantic irony. We shall see later how Kierkegaard adopts – and subverts – a romantic-ironic style in the 'Musical Erotic', a section on musical aesthetics in the first part of *Either/Or*.<sup>26</sup> But to understand the conceptual moves Kierkegaard makes through intertwined layers of indirect communication, we will need to be aware of the conceptual background of the aesthetic criticism which he offers (at least ostensibly).

<sup>24</sup> See K. Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 84-85.

<sup>25</sup> I shall be offering, through an analysis of Coleridge's aesthetics (in chapter seven, below), an alternative account of the aesthetic intimation of transcendence, and thus identifying a significantly different form of romanticism, in contrast to which the 'ironising romanticism' addressed here, and against which both Hegel and Kierkegaard took issue, will be identified as 'pseudo-romanticism'. See introduction to chapter 1, above and appendix 1, below.

<sup>26</sup> See footnote 1, above, for details.

### **(3) Hegelian and romantic aesthetics subserve Kierkegaardian theology: layers of indirect communication**

In subsections (3.1), (3.2) and (3.3), I offer materials necessary to understand the different aspects of Kierkegaard's 'Musical Erotic', as gradually presented over section three. These sections, cumulatively, form the context of understanding for my theological interpretation of Kierkegaard's aesthetic position in (3.4). The continuity of the next subsections is thus provided by their cumulative relevance to an argumentative focus in (3.4).

As indicated at the end of section two, in the next subsection I shall be considering the Hegelian conceptual background of the aesthetic criticism offered by Kierkegaard in the 'Musical Erotic'. This is because an understanding of Kierkegaard's critical approach here depends not only on awareness of the strategy of indirect communication he employs (as addressed above), but also of the Hegelian aesthetic which is espoused by Kierkegaard's pseudonym, 'A', or 'the aesthete'. The 'aesthete' will be shown to offer a multi-valenced, or layered position, his Hegelianism subverting the romanticism of his style.

Central to the argument of the 'Musical Erotic' is the suggestion that music reflects a pre-ethical state of human nature. An understanding of the arguments developing from this position will depend on my presenting Kierkegaard's concept of moral imagination in (3.2), as an imaginative inwardness in opposition to the romantic musical aesthetic that is criticised, along Hegelian lines, by Kierkegaard's aesthetic pseudonym. This romantic musical model (related to Schlegel's romantic-ironic position, already met) will itself be briefly introduced in (3.1).

Thus I shall argue in this section that a form of Schlegelian romantic-ironic discourse is utilised, (in a doubled irony against itself), to argue on Hegelian grounds against a related romantic understanding of the quasi-religious significance of 'absolute' music.<sup>27</sup>

In (3.3), conceptual elements already introduced will be seen at work, as I offer an exegesis of the 'Musical Erotic' in terms of metaphysical desire.

In (3.4), I suggest that Kierkegaard himself intends to subvert, indirectly, the Hegelianism of his pseudonym. I shall argue that not only is romantic discourse subverted, but that the pseudonym's Hegelian position is also subverted in a further Kierkegaardian twist. I shall

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<sup>27</sup> See Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, 'The Characteristic Inner Nature of the Musical Art and the Psychology of Today's Instrumental Music', from 'Contributions to the Fantasies on Art for the Friends of Art together with Ludwig Tieck's Preface', in Mary Hurst Schubert (tr. & intro.), *Wilhelm Wackenroder's 'Confessions' and 'Fantasies'*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971) pp. 188-194; see also Walzel, *German Romanticism*, pp. 121-124. A contextualising introduction to this musical romanticism will be provided in section 3.1.



contend that the complex literary counterpoint of 'The Musical Erotic' is ultimately invoked by Kierkegaard in the interests of an indirect communication of Christian revelation.

### **(3.1) Hegelian philosophy and absolute music in the 'Musical Erotic'**

Hegel's concern for the intrinsic significance of the aesthetic content of a work of art, against Schlegel's ironic absolutisation of aesthetic form and creative subjectivity, is utilised as a convenient vehicle for Kierkegaard's aims.<sup>28</sup> Hegel is thus invoked as a partial ally, for once, in Kierkegaard's attack on romantic, aesthetic subjectivity through its own modes of speech. But Kierkegaard's indirection is two-sided: a double-edged sword. I will attempt to show that Hegelian assumptions about the nature of spirit are subverted from within, as Hegel's own conceptual apparatus is turned against him by Kierkegaard to sub-serve the interests of Christian faith as Kierkegaard understands it.

Don Giovanni is considered by Kierkegaard's aesthetic anonym to be the principle, or spiritual qualification of sensuous immediacy.<sup>29</sup> As its archetypal embodiment, the legendary Don Juan stands as an exemplar of the mode of life embraced by 'A'.<sup>30</sup> Schlegel's aesthetic adaptation of Fichte's absolute subjectivity was disapproved both by Hegel and Kierkegaard, but, I suggest, with diametrically opposite estimates of the nature of the absolute truth each sought to promote as transcending the viewpoint of aesthetic subjectivity.

What should eventually emerge is not only an understanding of Kierkegaard's subversion of Hegel's conception of spirit, or 'God', in terms of absolute objectivity, but Kierkegaard's own rehabilitation of the aesthetic dimension of truth as a correlate to the indeterminacy of existentially genuine communication, as intrinsic factors in the authentic life of faith. In relation to this latter conception of a 'higher' aesthetic truth, it will be suggested that for Kierkegaard, music represents a 'lower' medium of conceptual indeterminacy, and is thus dethroned from the sublime<sup>31</sup> associations with which first Wackenroder, and then Schopenhauer adorned it in the wake of Kant and the post-Kantian drive for a synthesis to overcome Kantian epistemological dualism.<sup>32</sup> I shall be suggesting that a 'higher indeterminacy' of faith, or 'musical indirectness' (as interpreted by Steven Shakespeare),<sup>33</sup> and a subjective response in the form of an imaginative holding together of conceptual determinacy and indeterminacy (as understood by

<sup>28</sup> Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, pp. 70-74.

<sup>29</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, pp. 92-93.

<sup>30</sup> Notice especially 'A's unwillingness, habituated almost into an incapacity, to commit to any position or settled mode of life, as evoked in the chapter 'Diapsalmata', in *Either/Or* part 1, pp. 19-43.

<sup>31</sup> For an in-depth, historically informed assessment of the concept of aesthetic sublimity, see Samuel H. Monk, *The Sublime*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960).

<sup>32</sup> For Kantian dualism, see chapter 3, section 1. This drive pervaded romanticism and absolute idealism alike, as two related streams: see Carl Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, J. Bradford Robinson (tr.) (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989,) p. 91.

<sup>33</sup> Steven Shakespeare, *Kierkegaard, Language and the Reality of God*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p. 69.

M. Jamie Ferreira),<sup>34</sup> are opposed by Kierkegaard to Hegel's rational objectivity, as he combats Hegel's claim to have surpassed faith, objectively, through a dialectical logic capable of knowing the absolute.

In the 'Musical Erotic', while simultaneously utilising the style and undermining the significance of Schlegelian irony, Kierkegaard takes up arms against another strand of romantic aesthetic thought, in which, (notably in the work of Wilhelm Wackenroder, Ludwig Tieck, E.T.A. Hoffman<sup>35</sup> and subsequently Schopenhauer), post-Kantian idealist themes (especially relating to views put forward in Schelling's *Philosophy of Art*) are put to use in musical aesthetics.<sup>36</sup> Music is seen as a more concrete embodiment than any other art-form of the 'poetic': that which is creative in works of art, a romantic term for the expressive intimation or evocation of the absolute, manifest aesthetically as an infinite yearning for wholeness. Along such lines, Wackenroder and Tieck developed an aesthetic of the musical sublime.<sup>37</sup> Against the prevailing 'psychological' aesthetic of eighteenth century classicism, for which, (following Rousseau against Rameau in musical aesthetical terms),<sup>38</sup> the personally immediate communication of feeling through vocal music was a model for instrumental music to imitate, romantic aesthetics (especially in E. T. A. Hoffmann) takes the symphony, as a solely instrumental form of purely musical structures of meaning, as its paradigm.<sup>39</sup> Music ceases to be seen merely as a means of moving and cultivating personal feelings.<sup>40</sup> Thus Schopenhauer could regard emotion itself, conceived as a metaphysical dynamic, rather than an individual's experience of emotion, as presented musically. Romantic aesthetics sees in 'absolute music'

<sup>34</sup> M. Jamie Ferreira, *Transforming Vision: Imagination and Will in Kierkegaardian Faith*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>35</sup> For Wackenroder and Tieck on music, see note 27 above; for E. T. A. Hoffmann, see David Charlton (ed. & intro.), *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings: 'Kreisleriana', 'The Poet and the Composer', Music Criticism*, Martyn Clarke (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). For Schopenhauer on music, see *The World as Will and Representation* 2 vols., E. F. J. Payne (tr.) (New York: Dover Publications, 1969) vol. 1, pp. 255-267; vol. 2, pp. 448-457.

<sup>36</sup> For F. W. J. Schelling on music, see *The Philosophy of Art*, Douglas W. Stott (ed., trans. & intro.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 107-119. Unlike Wackenroder, however, who sees music as expressing a language of emotion elevated above the mere 'husks' of words and concepts, music for Schelling (in 1801) represents the informing of eternal metaphysical identity, or 'indifference', into finitude as considered in its relatively material aspect, or as sonority, (as opposed to painting, which embodies insight into the infinite through the relative ideality of light). As thus formally or ideally undifferentiated (not to be confused with 'indifference'), music is the furthest of the arts from language and reason, representing the centrifugal force of multiplicity pulling away from centredness. So as allegorically evoking an ever-absent eternal wholeness, rather than symbolically embodying it through finite form (as in a painting), music is said to be furthest of the arts from self-consciousness, for which it longs in the form of pure emotion or endless yearning. Schopenhauer would extend this view, while elevating music to the adequate representation of the Will, conceived as his ultimate metaphysical principle.

<sup>37</sup> Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, p. 89.

<sup>38</sup> Dahlhaus, Carl, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, Roger Lustig (tr.) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 47-48. This was the famous 'Querelle des Anciens et Modernes', in which Jean-Jacques Rousseau espoused a contemporary aesthetic of 'sensitivity' against Jean-Philippe Rameau, the composer and musical theoretician, who favoured a traditional Pythagorean-Platonic, numerological view of music, regarding harmonic relationships as embodiments of cosmological archetypes, or structuring principles. (For the Pythagorean account of harmony, see 'Fifth Century Pythagoreanism', in Jonathan Barnes (ed., tr. and & intro.), *Early Greek Philosophy*, (London: Penguin, 1987), pp. 208-211. For Plato on the harmonic proportion of the universe, see 'Timaeus: Creation of the World-Soul', in Joscelyn Godwin (ed.), *Harmony of the Spheres: A Sourcebook of the Pythagorean Tradition in Music*, (Rochester: Inner Traditions International, 1993), pp. 3-6; for a treatment of the principles of harmony in terms of Platonic geometry, see Johannes Kepler, 'Mysterium Cosmographicum: Planetary Aspects and Intervals' and 'Harmonices Mundi: Planet Songs', in *Harmony of the Spheres*, pp. 221-235. For Rameau's harmonic/metaphysical approach to musical theory, see excerpts from his 'Traité de Harmonie' and 'Nouvelles Réflexions', in *Harmony of the Spheres*, pp. 309-313. For Rousseau on music, see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Dictionnaire de Musique*, (Paris, 1768; reprint, Hildesheim, 1969).

<sup>39</sup> See especially Hoffmann's review 'Beethoven's Fifth Symphony', in *E. T. A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings*, pp. 234-251.

<sup>40</sup> '...a means for moving and cultivating personal feelings': this view was above all expressed in the eighteenth century aesthetic concept *Empfindsamkeit*, according to which vocal music was a paradigm for instrumental imitation, a position notably represented in the compositions of C. P. E. Bach).

(pure, or wordless, instrumental music) an end in its own right for aesthetically disinterested contemplation.<sup>41</sup> Such ‘pure’ music is semantically indeterminate in that there is nothing that it could be said to be ‘about’ (programme music and the imitation of nature being regarded as an aberration) except its own, material form of rhythmic, harmonic and melodic patterns.<sup>42</sup> In the aesthetics of Wackenroder and Tieck, divine, healing wholeness is not captured or grasped, rather the pre-subjective unity of subjective and objective reality is manifest as the infinite, conceptually indeterminate yearning that *is* the concrete, temporal development of a musical performance’s organic, inherent structure. The infinite is intimated in and as pure, musical architectonics. The inner essence of a piece of music, its internal, purely musical structure is a temporally finite presentiment of infinite longing: an embodied intimation of absolute wholeness. Musical structure is thus thought to be the most concrete embodiment of the ‘poetic’, (in the sense indicated above), as enshrining an inner kernel of infinite or divine intimation.<sup>43</sup>

While Hegel and Kierkegaard both see verbal meaning as essential to the communication of divine truth, as opposed to a romantic conception of music as a sublime intimation of absolute reality, they completely differ in their conception of the creative principle or *arche* of reality. The Hegelian logos is a metaphysically self-constructive logic, proceeding through self-negation to self-realisation,<sup>44</sup> (an epistemic ‘realisation’ masquerading as an ontological one, for Kierkegaard),<sup>45</sup> while Kierkegaard’s ‘logos – Christ – is the infinite paradox of an eternally significant, and thus qualitatively unique, spatio-temporal, personal communication.<sup>46</sup> But perhaps Kierkegaard communicates his theology pseudonymously through the metaphysical structure of Hegelian aesthetics, in ‘The Musical Erotic’. Therefore an indication of Hegel’s aesthetic philosophy must be given, in order to see how Kierkegaard could be said to transform it in the light of an opposing conviction: that of Christian faith.

Through his metaphysical logic, his conception of the self-developing absolute, Hegel seeks to surpass the position of Schelling, whose intellectual intuition of the grounding unity of ideality and reality is dismissed in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a ‘night in which all cows are black’.<sup>47</sup> Hegel also seeks to surpass a romantic concept of the primordial unity of subjectivity and objectivity that can be aesthetically intuited through the sublime indefiniteness of a certain kind of art, but never adequately embodied, since the very finitude of artistic production

<sup>41</sup> The earlier, romantic sense in which the term ‘absolute music’ is used here is to be distinguished from Eduard Hanslick’s post-idealist use of the term, half a century later, (see Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, pp. 128-129).

<sup>42</sup> As, for example, in Joseph Haydn’s oratorio, *The Creation*.

<sup>43</sup> Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, pp.89-91.

<sup>44</sup> Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A. V. Miller (tr.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §§ 31-59, pp. 18-36.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol. 1, p. 190.

<sup>46</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol. 1, pp.196-206.

<sup>47</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 16, p. 9.

simultaneously denies a tangibility to such intimation.<sup>48</sup> For Schlegel, as seen, absolute truth is necessarily non-manifesting. Against this, Hegel puts forward his conception of a historically self-developing, and thus content-rich absolute.

Hegel's aesthetics can only be understood in relation to his overarching absolute idealism, for which mind, or spirit (*Geist*) is the self-developing essence of reality as a whole. Philosophy is historicised on the basis of Hegel's identification of metaphysics with a dynamic conception of logic as a self-unfolding movement of universal construction.<sup>49</sup>

Hegel writes, in his *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*,<sup>50</sup> that at the stage of the historical development of absolute spirit represented by classical Greek civilisation, a sculptural idealisation of spirit's immediate concrete form, the human body, constituted an adequate awareness of absolute truth. Aesthetic representation was adequate to the ideal to be portrayed, aesthetic form and ideal content being sufficient to each other. In classical sculpture, art thus reaches an unsurpassable zenith at an early stage of the development of spirit.

But this adequacy of art to truth is historically relative, representing an as yet immature stage of the self-consciousness of absolute spirit. Art will never again be adequate to what it seeks to portray, as self-unfolding truth deepens into purely spiritual manifestations beyond the reach of sensuous apprehension.<sup>51</sup> Art may develop as art, but the beauty it strives for and succeeds in evoking ever more deeply will no longer be an adequate vehicle for absolute truth. In the Christian era, (which is the romantic era artistically speaking, according to Hegel's and a common, early romantic-philosophical<sup>52</sup> use of the term), art strives, and succeeds in moving towards spiritual inwardness, reflecting the prevailing cultural awareness of absolute spirit's pilgrimage and return to adequate self-consciousness, through the self-negation of its own embodiment, which is now religiously apprehended.

As pre-philosophical – pre-Hegelian, that is – this religious affirmation of absolute truth is still only an implicit awareness, however. As conscious understanding (*Verstand*) in the form of faith projects its own inner truth outside itself, it overlays an implicit awareness of absolute truth with the figurative forms (*Vorstellung*), or 'picture-language' of a divine incarnation that passes through the negation of crucifixion, to be resurrected as the divine spiritual presence that is at one with, and empowers the life of the Christian community.<sup>53</sup> Just as the aesthetically

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<sup>48</sup> Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, pp. 69-74.

<sup>49</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§ 36, 37, 48, pp 21-22, 28-29.

<sup>50</sup> Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, § CVI, pp. 82-85.

<sup>51</sup> Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, p. xxvi.

<sup>52</sup> See Schelling, *Philosophy of Art*, §§ 39-61, pp. 45-82.

<sup>53</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §§ 765, 786, pp. 463, 476.

imagined and appreciated idea is not adequate to the emergence of an inward and spiritual understanding of the presence of God to the faithful soul, so such faith itself is inadequate as compared to philosophical reason (*Vernunft*), whose polar, logical structure, as the structure of mind itself, is identical to the self-creative structure of reality.

What marks the transition for classical to romantic art for Hegel is an inward re-focusing of the human spirit with the birth of Christianity. Romantic art, reflecting the Christian religious understanding that God is spirit, strives, through painting, music and poetry to break away from fully concrete three-dimensionality in its portrayals of the 'idea' (Hegel's term for absolute reality, or truth in and for itself, as reflected back through its own negation).<sup>54</sup> It will have its successes measured by purely artistic standards, but its aspirations towards spirit will never be adequate to spirit.

Music is a romantic art situated on the hierarchy of inwardness above painting's abstraction from material three-dimensionality, but beneath poetic language, which, in utilising concepts, is superior to music in spirituality, according to Hegel's identification of rational thought with spirit, as the ultimate nature of reality. Music expresses awareness of the spiritual nature of ideal truth by confining itself 'to an undefined movement of the inward, spiritual nature': music is thus characterised as semantically indeterminate.<sup>55</sup> Hegel says that 'musical sounds' are 'as it were, feeling without my thought'.<sup>56</sup>

This Hegelian formula – feeling without thought – clearly influences Kierkegaard's (or his anonym, 'A's) notion of music as the spiritual qualification of sensuous immediacy in 'The Musical Erotic', as will be seen. The primordial 'Word' for Hegel – the creative logos – is dialectical or polar logic. It will be suggested that Kierkegaard's 'aesthete' takes up a variant of this Hegelian position on the inadequacy of art to spirit in his discussion of the inferiority of the language of music as compared to verbal language in *Either/Or*, but in the interests of the role of the subject in paradoxical Christian faith.

For both Hegel and Kierkegaard, the adequacy of a beautiful work to convey an aesthetic idea is dependent on the degree to which medium and message are integrated by it. Content and aesthetic form should be perfectly adapted to one another. 'A's writing in 'The Musical Erotic' is fully informed by the Hegelian understanding of aesthetics, and Kierkegaard's aesthetic pseudonym is ironically self-conscious of the fact: 'in a classic work, good fortune – that which

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<sup>54</sup> Hegel, 'Lectures on Aesthetics, (1818-1820)', in E. A. Lippman (ed.), *Musical Aesthetics: A Historical Reader* 3 vols. (Stuyvesant (N.Y.): Pendragon Press, 1988) vol. 2, pp. 86-97.

<sup>55</sup> Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, § XLV, p. 32

<sup>56</sup> Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, § XLV, p. 32

makes it classic and immortal – is the absolute correlation of the two forces [content and form]’.<sup>57</sup> There is nothing obvious or contrived – no appearance of effort – about the utterly appropriate conjunction of formative activity with the subject matter or content it is expressing: ‘This correlation is so absolute that a subsequent reflective age will scarcely be able, even in thought, to separate that which is so intrinsically conjoined without running the danger of causing or fostering a misunderstanding’.<sup>58</sup>

The aesthete praises Hegel as one concerned to bring objectivity back into the appreciation of art, who ‘reinstated the subject matter, the idea, in its rights, and thereby ousted those transient classic works, those superficialities, those twilight moths’<sup>59</sup> of an unbridled aesthetic subjectivism: Schlegel’s romanticism, as we have seen, having denied the equal importance of content to artistic form. Kierkegaard continues: ‘what these [romantic] productions lacked was ideas, and the more formally perfect they were, the more quickly they burned themselves out’.<sup>60</sup> It is contended that a Schlegelian romantic approach to art is no more than ‘an expression of the unbridled producing individual in his equally unbridled lack of substance’.<sup>61</sup> It might be said that the romantic poet is engaged in his own form of the endless deferral of significance; he will always be in the throes of an intrinsically un-fulfil-able yearning for a necessarily absent ‘absolute’.<sup>62</sup> His fashionable follower, more mundanely, will be in thrall to the pursuit of necessarily transient pleasure and a concomitant and self-defeating struggle against boredom, perhaps resorting to *ennui* as an aesthetic pose, an ironic shield against ethical self-confrontation and commitment.<sup>63</sup>

Yet Kierkegaard does acknowledge an important, ethical role for aesthetic consciousness, albeit a role which separates imaginative activity entirely from its artistic employments. Ethico-aesthetic activity can find no room for artistic creativity and appreciation. And yet it is precisely Kierkegaard’s own literary creativity that enables him indirectly to communicate his ethico-religious message. I shall be expanding on this problem as we proceed through the next chapter. As stated in the introduction to this, a resolution of this dilemma forms the goal of my thesis. Now I turn to discuss Kierkegaard’s concept of ethical imagination, or aesthetic consciousness, as needed for an appreciation of the significance of music, as deemed to be expressive of pre-ethical or a-moral life, in ‘The Musical Erotic’.

<sup>57</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 49.

<sup>58</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 49.

<sup>59</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 53.

<sup>60</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 54.

<sup>61</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 53.

<sup>62</sup> See Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, p. 84.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Kierkegaard, ‘Diapsalmata’, in *Either/Or* part 1, pp.36-37.

### **(3.2) Judge William: ethical inwardness and the beauty of faithful love**

In spite of his dim view of the false freedom of unbridled aesthetic subjectivity, Kierkegaard believes that aesthetic values find a transformed place in more intrinsically fulfilling modes of existence. Collins, in *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, writes that ‘the culmination of Hegel’s dialectic is the complete self-consciousness of the absolute notion, whereas the culmination of Kierkegaard’s dialectic is the relating of the finite individual to the transcendent but loving God’.<sup>64</sup> The individual in his inwardness, his character, is Kierkegaard’s focus, whereas Hegel’s is an external point of view regarding the individual, as what amounts to no more than a spatio-temporal point determined by universally necessary laws of thought. The interest for such an abstract point of view lies in the impersonal determinants, not in the individuality which is determined by them, and thus from Kierkegaard’s perspective of subjectivity, the whole, as the interior significance or concretely meaningful existence of the personality, is passed over.

Thus there can be no question of logical determination as a means of transition between the triad of anthropological spheres that are postulated by Kierkegaard. There are three ‘stages on life’s way’: the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious, which latter phase Kierkegaard subdivides into natural religion, or a relation to divine eternity as an objective ideality, on the one hand, as opposed to a paradoxical faith in Christian revelation, on the other.<sup>65</sup> Christian revelation is an infinite subjective relation to an infinite paradox, an ever deepening journey into inwardness through repentance. This ‘inwardising’ movement is described both in the sermon at the end of the second part of *Either/Or*, which hints towards the inadequacy of an autonomous or self-sufficient ethical stance<sup>66</sup>, and also in *Stages of Life’s Way*, Kierkegaard suggesting in the latter that the ethicist who seeks to found his principles on his own moral rectitude will always eventually discover himself morally bankrupt: ‘The aesthetic sphere is the sphere of immediacy, the ethical, the sphere of requirement (and the requirement is so infinite that one always goes bankrupt) the religious sphere the sphere of fulfilment’.<sup>67</sup> Kierkegaard thus suggests that the ethical sphere is transitional, its highest expression being ‘repentance as a negative action’. Repentance is a surrender of all illusory claims to moral autonomy as the awareness dawns of one’s infinite and saving relatedness, which is at the same time infinite judgement, through personal encounter with Christ.

While logical determination is ruled out as a means of transition between existential spheres, Kierkegaard already acknowledges, through the ethicist, Judge William in the second part of

<sup>64</sup> Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, p. 48.

<sup>65</sup> See Søren Kierkegaard, ‘Letter to the Reader’, *Stages on Life’s Way*, in H. V. & E. H. Hong (ed. & tr.), *Kierkegaard’s Writings* (XI), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 476.

<sup>66</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, ‘The Upbuilding That Lies in the Thought That in Relation to God, We Are Always in the Wrong’, in *Either/Or* part 2, in *Either/Or* 2 parts, in H. V. & E. H. Hong (ed. & tr.), *Kierkegaard’s Writings* (IV), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp. 339-354.

<sup>67</sup> Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life’s Way*, p. 476.

*Either/Or*, the accommodation that aspects of natural, or aesthetic human nature must find within the ethical sphere.<sup>68</sup> The aesthetic components of human being, imagination and the felt immediacy of emotion and mood, are not bad in themselves, but are one-sidedly dominant in aesthetic existence. These functions are transformed, according to the Judge, within the ethical sphere, and find their real fulfilment not in art or ephemeral self-gratification, but through the ‘inward’ role they play in ethical commitment.

The Judge insists against common aesthetic prejudice that the beauty of ‘first love’ survives through the settled nature of married life. He maintains that there is no deeper appropriation of what is felt in the merely aesthetic concept of love, and therefore no real possession.<sup>69</sup> The difference between the love that interests us in a story by being suited to artistic representation and ethically faithful love concerns the temporal nature of life. Life can find a deepening or growing centre within a self-consistent course of personal and inter-personal cultivation, or alternatively one can seek one’s fulfilment outside of oneself in a string of unrelated diversions, allowing attention to be momentarily captured by exciting or engrossing situations.<sup>70</sup> The latter course demands no truly personal involvement: one takes up a third person perspective, no matter how excited one may become, just like a spectator in the theatre.<sup>71</sup> The aesthete of the first part of *Either/Or*, is given over to this latter conception of the temporal relation between self and others in that he seeks to make of his life a work of art, contriving interesting and diverting situations and predicaments with which to entertain himself, whiling away his time.

In view of these two alternative styles of living, the Judge writes: ‘with regard to individual life there are two kinds of history, outer and the inner’.<sup>72</sup> These form two currents, moving away from one another. The outer, or aesthetic conception of love is suited to dramatic and narrative presentation, but a fairy tale can end, or the curtain come down with an assertion that life will be lived ‘happily ever after’, without the audience feeling cheated because this continuance is not portrayed as a dramatic theme. In Judge William’s terms, the ‘outer’, or dramatically representable relation to love stops short just where the ‘inner’, or ethical aesthetic of a love which deepens in the outwardly uninteresting continuity of faithfulness takes flight. But this flight does not soar, silhouetted against an admirable sunset as something to be aesthetically beheld. Rather it takes place in shared looks and glances, mutual recognition and remembrance, in private jokes and pet foibles known only to each other; and in the passage through and survival of temptation, difficulty, and suffering. The goal of such ‘existential’ aesthetics – inhabited and made real from within – is the way travelled, not its representation; a

<sup>68</sup> Kierkegaard, ‘The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage’, in *Either/Or* part 2, pp. 3-154, *passim*.

<sup>69</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 2, pp. 58-9.

<sup>70</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 2, pp. 127-137.

<sup>71</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 2, p. 144.

<sup>72</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 2, p. 134.



representation which could not be successful in any case, since it is an inner yet reciprocated, invisible beauty – a truly spiritual beauty. If the representation of such beauty were attempted it would bore us, since by its very nature it is externally unremarkable: it does not take an uninvolved onlooker's breath away. The difference between external and inward beauty in love is one of time, inhabited and made meaningful from within through being claimed as one's own. The life-long union of two people thus turns their shared time into the medium for a growing incarnation of love.

The immediate point of concern here is that Kierkegaard finds a place, as we have discovered, for aesthetic activity and appreciation to be transformed within a higher, ethical sphere of existence. However, Kierkegaard also regards this ethical sphere as itself transitory, as in need of a paradoxical religious dimension beyond the capacity of a philosophical 'natural religion' to provide. It remains to be seen whether an aesthetic, imaginative element may not also be involved in the life of paradoxical faith, as Kierkegaard presents it. This issue will form the focus of chapter two.

As specified in the introduction to this section, and on the basis of what we have just learned, I now bring together the different conceptual contexts examined in (3.1) and (3.2), to show the ethical interest undergirding the pseudonymous author's aesthetic interpretation in 'The Musical Erotic'. But in (3.4) I shall suggest that Kierkegaard himself may be pointing beyond Hegelian aesthetic tenets to his own strategy of the aesthetically indirect communication of paradoxical Christian faith.

### **(3.3) Mozart's music: Kierkegaard and metaphysical desire**

In 'The Musical Erotic', Kierkegaard (in the guise of 'A') suggests that Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni* is a truly unique classic because it perfectly expresses sensuous immediacy, or pure, striving vitality, which is the most *abstract content* – i.e. the most rationally undeveloped, according to Hegel's conception of historical reason – in the most *abstract form* of aesthetic representation – music. Musical significance, as not linguistically mediated, is *semantically indeterminate*. Just as music expresses felt, subjective immediacy for Hegel, so for Kierkegaard it evokes pure feelings in themselves, as the immediate 'shapes' of experienced vitality.<sup>73</sup> The uniqueness of *Don Giovanni* lies in the perfect compatibility of form and content. Primordial sensuality, or sensuous immediacy,<sup>74</sup> cannot be perfectly painted, because it has no tangible contours. It cannot be a perfect subject for poetic expression because it is instinctive, part of the animal substrate of human life, and thus pre-linguistic.

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<sup>73</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, pp. 56-57.

<sup>74</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 71.

Don Giovanni or Don Juan is not just a character in Mozart's opera as 'A' sees things, but the entire opera constitutes an expression of 'Don Giovanni conceived as an archetypal figure or principle, as the adequate symbolic embodiment of the meaning of sensuous immediacy. As an archetype, 'Don Giovanni' is more than just an individual character expressing physical desire; desire in itself is a metaphysical principle symbolically embodied as this character.<sup>75</sup> But this symbolic embodiment, as the content and theme of the entire opera, is not restricted to the input of the lead-role, but pervades every note of the music. The archetype 'Don Giovanni' thus makes his presence felt even when the character is off-stage. 'Don Juan [as the adequate representation and evocation of natural vitality, the undetermined will-to-live] is a picture that is constantly coming into view but does not attain form and consistency, an individual who is constantly being formed but is never finished'.<sup>76</sup> Human life is always individuated, finite (my life as opposed to yours) and yet always unfinished. There can be no adequate, objective definition of a living 'work in progress' such as the subjectively experienced reality of human becoming. However, the ethical subject chooses self-consistently, tries to train his becoming to conform to self-motivated and motivating norms, and thus lives in the process of becoming his chosen ethical objective or ideal. But as we have seen, this project will always 'go bankrupt', as ideals are infinitely complete and the resources of human beings are those of finite and erring process. The aesthetic subject does not choose himself ethically, and thus the aesthete has in a sense no life to call his own, but is swept up into a vicious circle of un-ending repetitions of a craving that is in principle insatiable. Don Giovanni, as a symbol, is this principle of insatiability: and as such an archetypal evocation 'about whose history one cannot learn except by listening to the noise of the waves'.<sup>77</sup>

The Don Giovanni archetype is interminable, he is Schopenhauer's metaphysical will, and thus indeterminate in himself. He is the relentless energy of both inorganic and organic nature. He stands as much for the ceaseless reformation of matter through attrition and erosion, as for the processes of decline and decay, of regeneration and reproduction.

Hegel sees musical tone as the immediate inwardness of matter because in music it is released from spatiality as essentially oscillation in time, which corresponds to the transient oscillations between excitation and depression of emotion and desire in human, pre-reflective subjectivity. Similarly, Kierkegaard writes 'sensuous love is a disappearance in time, but the medium that expresses this is indeed music'.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 85.

<sup>76</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 92.

<sup>77</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 92.

<sup>78</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 95.

Music for Kierkegaard is a semantically indefinite medium, but insofar as it generalises felt immediacy, it expresses meaning, and thus is, in an ambiguous sense, spiritual: a language without words, or spiritually qualified by its exclusion from language proper.<sup>79</sup> Music is the only suitable format to portray and embody the Don Juan symbol because ‘he’, like music, is essentially oscillation. Just as sound is oscillating energy manifesting as distinct tones, so dynamic vitality is always embodied as individuals.

I mean to argue that what Kierkegaard, or at least his anonym, has to say about the nature of the relation between spirit and the natural vitality we have been discussing as excluded from the Christian spirit would suggest a disconcertingly Hegelian conception of traditional Christian belief. First, however I need to introduce some contextualisation.

It is held, as we have just seen, that the purely natural or pre-ethical in human being is spiritually qualified through music as that which is most abstract and un-reflected; as furthest from language, it is qualified as that which is excluded from the realm of spirit. A distinction, furthermore, is made between vital desire in its pure sensuous immediacy, or ‘Don Juan/Giovanni’, and the figure of ‘Faust’. Both are perhaps like Hegel’s *Vorstellungen*. As mentioned previously, Hegel saw traditional narrative, ‘picture thinking’ as a stage in the development of mind in which thought is still weak and largely unaware of its own nature. Mythical and folkloric themes spring up spontaneously, and largely unconsciously, as far as concerns any awareness of the true, rational significance that undergirds the figurative symbols that thought in its naivety clings to for support.

Just as, for Hegel, the ‘picture language’ of orthodox Christian doctrine is not fully conscious of the deep truth which rationally undergirds it, concerning the dialectical identity of the rational human subject and absolute mind, so Kierkegaard’s aesthete suggests that mediaeval folklore<sup>80</sup> acquired the ‘partly conscious, partly unconscious’<sup>81</sup> idea that individual personifications can act as symbols of aspects of human nature, expressing the whole through a particular refraction such as sensuous immediacy in its universality (the significance of which we have seen to be that which is spiritually qualified through its exclusion from the realm of spirit). Kierkegaard distinguishes Giovanni from Faust on the basis of their relation to the revealed Christian spirit, suggesting that Faust in a sense *is* Giovanni, only as representing the universality of human sensuality in a different relation to spirit. While Giovanni is that which knows nothing as yet of

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<sup>79</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 71.

<sup>80</sup> Especially through the brothers Grimm, the significance of folklore was an important early romantic theme. See David Luke’s introduction to Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Selected Tales*, David Luke (intro. and tr.) (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1982), pp. 9-40.

<sup>81</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 87.

the Christian revelation, Faust is the same blatant sensuous immediacy acting in rebellion to spirit, in full awareness that it has been judged by spirit as that which lies outside spirit: i.e., sin. Faust is unfettered desire after consciousness of the spiritual judgement passed upon it. Faust is thus demonic rebellion, while Giovanni is pre-ethical vitality, before sin-consciousness. In this regard, it may be profitable to quote what Kierkegaard says of Giovanni at some length:

In the middle Ages, much was told about a mountain which is not found on any map; it is called Mount Venus. There sensuousness has its home; there it has its wild pleasures, for it is a kingdom, a state. In this kingdom, language has no home, nor the collectedness of thought, nor the laborious achievements of reflection; there is heard only the elemental voice of passion, the play of desires... The first-born of the kingdom is Don Juan. But it is not said thereby that it is the kingdom of sin for it must be contained in the moment when it appears in aesthetic indifference. Only when reflection enters in does it manifest itself as the kingdom of sin, but then Don Juan has been slain, then the music stops, then one sees only the desperate defiance that powerlessly resists but can find no firm ground, not even in sounds. When sensuousness manifests itself as that which must be excluded, as that with which the spirit does not wish to be involved, but when spirit has not as yet condemned it, sensuousness takes this form, is the demonic in aesthetic indifference...

Don Juan, then, is the expression for the demonic qualified as the sensuous [that spirit excludes]; Faust is the expression for the demonic qualified as the spiritual that the Christian spirit excludes.<sup>82</sup>

Here the Hegelianism of 'A's aesthetic discourse broadens out into a position reminiscent of certain aspects of Hegel's characterisation of 'the unhappy consciousness', in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*.<sup>83</sup> Hegel (as also 'A') suggests that faith has at best only an implicit awareness of the essential spiritual identity of worshipped and worshipper. The mediaeval Christian experiences this objectification – as God – of his own innermost truth in terms of a painfully divided consciousness. He experiences an impasse between flesh and spirit that is unbridgeable from his finite viewpoint. All moral action is experienced as useless, worthless, because the Christian needs supernatural salvation from sin, having projected all true value into a transcendent beyond. Yet guilt-consciousness is experienced as very real and oppressively painful. I will be arguing later that this is an invalid description of Christianity (both on the part of 'A' and that of Hegel). Rather it is a picture of the Pauline description of a pre-Christian bondage to the law, which makes sin 'exceeding sinful' before the possibility of justification by

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<sup>82</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 90.

<sup>83</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, § 210, pp. 127-128, p. 525.

faith through grace.<sup>84</sup> The description of ‘Don Giovanni’ as condemned by spirit in the ceasing of the music and the fall of the curtain would also accord well with Judge William’s picture of ethical autonomy, which we have already seen Kierkegaard to regard as inevitably destined for moral bankruptcy, from the perspective of paradoxical faith.

But I shall also argue, at the end of this chapter, that although this understanding of ‘the unhappy consciousness’ is in no way Kierkegaard’s own avowed position concerning Christian faith, his denial of any role to outward-looking or artistic aesthetic activity within the life of faith (and, it would follow, to any role for the appreciation of beauty in nature), is discordant with his own aesthetic practice as a Christian writer, and, indeed, reminiscent of Hegel’s thinking with regard to ‘the unhappy consciousness’, as also of his pseudonymous description of Don Giovanni as ‘slain’ when ‘the music stops’, utterly condemned by judgement. I will be suggesting, therefore, that there is something pre-Pauline and legalistic lurking behind Kierkegaard’s theology of paradoxical grace, a damaging tendency that at least merits the attention of a thesis in pursuit of a possible solution.

However, I will also be suggesting as we progress that, even in ‘The Musical Erotic’, Kierkegaard (outward-looking aesthetics aside) does not entirely relegate the aesthetic aspect of human being to a spiritless desert, but sees the aesthetic as fulfilled and transformed, exclusively in inwardness, in the life of faith, albeit in a manner very different to Hegel’s historical synthesis.<sup>85</sup>

Collins, in *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, assesses Kierkegaard’s use of themes drawn from Hegel’s analysis of ‘the unhappy consciousness’ as directed at what is perceived to be a particular distortion of the Christian Gospel:

Just as St. Paul declares that sin came into the world insofar as the law aroused a consciousness of sin, so Kierkegaard attributes the appearance of the embodiment of sensuality, Don Juan, to Christianity in the sense that it directed attention away from the essentially good sensuous aspects of man in mediaeval spiritual asceticism.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Romans, 7.13, (Authorised Version).

<sup>85</sup> Hegel’s position integrates the ultimate conceptual value of imagination, while claiming to leave it behind in the ascent towards speculative science. See, however, Michael Inwood’s introduction, especially the section, ‘The End of Art or the End of History?’ in Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, pp. xxxi-xxxii, for an alternative view.

<sup>86</sup> Collins, *The Mind of Kierkegaard*, p. 52. This may well be the case, but does not account for what I shall be addressing – and have already drawn attention towards – as the issue of Kierkegaard’s own tendency to replicate this ‘ascetic’ move from a Protestant rather than mediaeval viewpoint. One might speculate that a traditional (and often violent) Protestant antipathy to religious art viewed as ‘idolatrous’ may be behind Kierkegaard’s concerns here, though I shall not be following up that issue. (Of course, it is also far from a foregone conclusion that this assessment of Catholic asceticism – whether Kierkegaard’s or not – is fully justifiable).

To clarify things, we have seen Kierkegaard's aesthete maintain that sensuous immediacy, as the dynamic of life itself, has only existed as a principle in explicit consciousness since the birth of Christianity. The principle of sensuous immediacy can only be hinted at in words, or symbolised, as that which lies on the other side of the border from (essentially verbal) spirit. In a neat dialectical move, Kierkegaard suggests that only by its exclusion from the spiritual, as being outside the religious ethic of the Christian era, is sensuous immediacy recognised for the first time, and for itself, in its own right. The searchlight of developing self-consciousness picks up its own, pre-reflective ground.<sup>87</sup> Spiritual significance posits by exclusion its own opposite.<sup>88</sup> And yet, ironically, spirit could not become aware of itself without reflection in its own antithesis, as Saint Paul makes clear in his Letter to the Romans: 'it was sin, working death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful without measure'.<sup>89</sup>

So in the anonym's account of Christian experience, the mind is said to become aware of sensuous immediacy for the first time as a contrast to the Christian consciousness which could not be perceived clearly before such consciousness was awakened, just as the contrast 'light' is needed to understand the concept of 'darkness'. To be thus excluded from spirit's self-awareness is to be posited by spirit as a factor of which it takes account – but as the awareness of that which lies outside its bounds.<sup>90</sup>

It is held in 'The Musical Erotic' that the living expression of passionate desire, as such a qualification of spirit by exclusion, cannot be adequately achieved by language (since it is an essentially inarticulate and pre-linguistic drive) but only through non-conceptual means – and those means are musical. We have already seen that the medium of music is itself spiritually qualified: a kind of language insofar as it expresses meaning. But by the very virtue of its unique adequacy to be a vehicle for the expression of sensuous immediacy, music is impoverished as compared to poetry, as it is adapted to express only indeterminate significance, and thus has its own essential content outside of spirit.<sup>91</sup> While music can be used to accompany determinate meaning, this is not its most fitting content. The perfect musical content is the life-force itself, pure desire, persisting for the sake of itself in endlessness. As indeterminate, music is regarded as an inferior, deficient language (against the common romantic paradigm of the musical sublime, as introduced above). As expressing determinate meaning, words are higher in

<sup>87</sup> I shall be offering very different analyses of Kantian and post-Kantian accounts of productive imaginative activity as a fundamental condition of self consciousness in later chapters.

<sup>88</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 61.

<sup>89</sup> Romans, 7.13, (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>90</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 66. Again, the idea of bounds, and of being bound, from a Pauline, orthodox perspective connotes law, whereas 'nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in the whole creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord', Romans, 8.39, (NRSV). See my final section in this chapter for a fuller contrast of the legalistic and the Christian, with reference to Kierkegaard's theology.

<sup>91</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, pp. 70-71.

value than the language of tone and feeling. But when poetry focuses on its own beautiful effects rather than on its content or subject matter– the ‘how’ of its sound- combinations at the expense of the ‘what’ of its ideas – as in romantic subjectivism (Schlegel), it misunderstands itself by ‘aspiring’ to be music. Poetry thus surrenders its own proper role as a superior medium of aesthetic communication. ‘A’ suggests that such verse may indeed be very beautiful, but has fallen beneath its own level as language. Musical indeterminacy also forms the cradle of verbal language through the inarticulate cries of babies (and, I would venture, the soothing sounds that lull them). At either end of the scale, therefore – in poetic musicality as in pre-linguistic cries and lullabies – semantic indeterminacy is regarded as inferior in significance to determinate meaning.<sup>92</sup>

Don Giovanni, then, as the flesh-incarnate portrayed by Mozart, is not avowedly evil, but the artistic representation of the ‘demonic in aesthetic indifference’.<sup>93</sup> Don Giovanni is only a possible representation in Christianity, he could not have occurred in a non-Christian context, since he is that which the Christian spirit excludes: the riot of selfish instinct. But the musical representation of him, for and in imagination, brackets out his exclusion to display spirit’s awareness of what it excludes. Spirit thus specifies what it excludes, musically. Spirit enables sensuality’s manifestation as musical indeterminacy. Kierkegaard, as ‘A’, locates the difficulty of philosophising upon musical experience in the view that music is the expression of the feeling-tone or mood that accents one’s conscious life.<sup>94</sup> We can name moods and feelings, but only music actually evokes them, traces their path as it is experienced in consciousness. Therefore to talk about emotional/musical memories is somehow to betray them, dredging them up from the borders of consciousness and the privacy of the cherished moments, in the full knowledge that in translating such non-verbal and thus essentially untranslatable memories into words, we are doing them an injustice, even violating them.<sup>95</sup>

In the next subsection I shall build on what we have just learned. I shall argue that language, far from being superior to aesthetically indirect communications such as music by virtue of its conceptual universality, as Hegel and Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous ‘aesthete’ would have it, may itself need to rely on aesthetic forms in order to overcome that very generality in relation to the divine. I shall argue that for Kierkegaard, communicating subversively behind his own pseudonym, not only does the generality of linguistic concepts prevent any direct, cognitive grasp of the everyday particularity of human life, but that language depends entirely on

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<sup>92</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 69.

<sup>93</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 90.

<sup>94</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, pp. 59-60.

<sup>95</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, pp. 59-60.

aesthetic indeterminacy to communicate a divine revelation that cannot be directly conceptualised: the human particularity of the infinite God as Christ.

### **(3.4) Kierkegaardian dialectics: the communication of faith as ‘musical indirection’**

In ‘The Musical Erotic’, we have just been learning that the position excluded by Christianity is sensuous immediacy: the pre-rational ground of meaning on which meaning depends, and as such, the reality that forms a necessary foundation for the emergence of human self-consciousness. We learned in (3.1) that this foundational immediacy of being, a pre-condition of all thinking, is simply passed over by Hegelian idealism.<sup>96</sup>

For the Kierkegaard of *Johannes Climacus*, similarly, being is recognised by thought as its own substratum, as something that self-consciousness depends on, although thought can never reach being in itself, but must always unavoidably translate reality into ideality. Language mediates reality, and thus tries to translate it, although, as I have suggested above in relation to music’s non-conceptual immediacy, even approximate adequacy of translation is only really possible between verbal systems. Thus is introduced the possibility of doubt and error.<sup>97</sup> In both ‘The Musical Erotic’ and *Johannes Climacus*, self-consciousness is a collision of ideality and reality. Reality is pre-conditional but un-sayable as reality within consciousness. Reality, or as we have been addressing it, dynamic sensuous immediacy, is thus made known with the awakening of self-consciousness as that which self-consciousness posits as necessarily lying outside of thought as its substratum. Don Giovanni, as archetypal personification, is this substratum, as a spiritual qualification of sensuous immediacy, and can thus only be adequately expressed in the conceptual indeterminacy of music.

Steven Shakespeare suggests that, in *Either/Or*, Kierkegaard subverts the aesthete’s thesis that music embodies sensuous immediacy by his dialectical recognition that any such embodiment is, as an expression, already an interpretation – and thus a ‘spiritual qualification’, or mediation – of immediate reality. Kierkegaard’s entire project is, as an interplay – or dialectic – of many voices, an indirect communication.<sup>98</sup> Just as music, the communication of the dynamic of pre-reflected life, must idealise sensuous immediacy as its communication, and is thus itself

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<sup>96</sup>I mean by this that Hegel (at least as Kierkegaard understands him), far from actually overcoming finitude’s incompleteness philosophically, has comically allowed a myopic identification with the objects of his own thought to deceive him into regarding his own existing subjectivity as an ultimate irrelevance, in utter unconcern for the ethical implications of such neglect. In a manner rather reminiscent of the story about Democritus being so intent on sky-gazing that he did not notice the ditch he was about to fall into right in front of him, Hegelianism tries to ignore existence as a cognitively uncertain, but definitely given task, the philosopher fantastically persuading himself that his only actual significance is his intellectual work, regarded as eternity’s own consciousness of itself. Kierkegaard sees Hegelian mediation as an attempt to walk over the chasm between history and eternity by triadic dialectic. By an illusory introduction of movement into logic the eternal appears to evolve through time: history is regarded as the manifestation of a self-reflexive eternity, but it has in fact been ‘passed over’, as I phrase it above. See, for example, Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 51-52, 145, 191-193, 197-198, 212-213, 306.

<sup>97</sup>Søren Kierkegaard, *Johannes Climacus*, in H. V. & E. H. Hong (ed. & tr.), *Kierkegaard’s Writings* (VII), (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), pp. 167-168.

<sup>98</sup>Shakespeare, *Kierkegaard, Language and the Reality of God*, pp. 64-70.



spiritually qualified, so the communication of paradoxical faith as an existential orientation, must exploit the poetical, aesthetic possibilities inherent in verbal language for a ‘musically indirect’ style of communication; possibilities made available by the condition of linguistic ideality as always dependently rooted in reality, interpreting it. Musical interpretation and scientific objectivity need to be regarded as polarities, linguistic possibilities at opposing but essentially related ends of an interpretive continuum.

Just as music reaches a fundamental level of existential communication by communicating felt immediacy non-objectively or wordlessly, so verbal language, in communicating subjective and paradoxical religious truth, must make use of its inherent capacity for rhetorical and poetic communication; its capacity for musical indirection. Divine reality can only be indirectly communicated as neither objective nor subjective purely, but an objectively impossible, or paradoxically revealed ‘object’, the God-man of *Philosophical Fragments*. The God of faith is neither an *a priori* pre-condition of ideality and reality, as thought in the romantic Jena Circle of Friedrich Schlegel and Schelling, nor yet a dialectically mediated identity of ideality and reality, as Hegel has it, but the higher indeterminacy of a rationally unthinkable ‘object’: a super-rational and supernatural revelation. Christian truth can only be communicated indirectly because God’s revealed reality is still apophatically beyond both ideality and reality, as indwelt by the finite subjective becoming of human being.

The un-reflected ‘zealotism’<sup>99</sup> or unmediated objectivity of the religious fanatic, or ‘enthusiast’<sup>100</sup> is denounced by Kierkegaard’s pseudonym Climacus in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* on precisely the same grounds, and to just the same extent, as Hegelian intellectualism: both would have a determinate knowledge of some objectively ascertainable, essential significance of Christian faith. An unreflective, fideistic assertion falls just as much into the error of believing itself to have achieved a final and indubitable possession of ultimate truth as does Hegelianism.<sup>101</sup> Both positions seek to privilege select groups, regarded as an ‘elect’: the academically ‘initiated’ on the one hand and a self-righteous ‘holy huddle’ on the other, as somehow exalted above the rest of humanity as ‘the one’s in the know’. Against both positions, Kierkegaard maintains that faith is not an enthusiastic posture to be assumed by the ‘revivalist’, enabling him to appear ‘matchlessly brilliant’ while avoiding the hard intellectual work of trying to understand: ‘better, in that case, speculative thought’s misunderstanding, in which, apart from this, there is an abundance to learn and admire in the men who combine the power of genius with the endurance of iron [...] The contradiction of the arrogating revivalist is that he [...] wants to be out on the street *and* be

<sup>99</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 31.

<sup>100</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 504.

<sup>101</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 562.

matchlessly brilliant'.<sup>102</sup> The outwardly striking display of the revivalist marks him out as still not having left behind the aesthetic sphere of life in which external considerations predominate to entice the individual away from the sheer difficulty of a living appropriation of paradoxical ethico-religious truth. Climacus's revivalist mistakenly thinks that he has understood the un-understandable,<sup>103</sup> the paradox that is Christian faith, missing the point that the paradox is not something divisive, segregating those who can from those who cannot understand it, but is 'connected essentially with being a human being'.<sup>104</sup>

Neither Hegel's nor Kierkegaard's view of ultimate truth is that it is simply objective, a straightforward determinacy above the indeterminacy of sensuous immediacy and its artistic representation. On the one hand, Hegel envisages a 'higher' objectivity of properly philosophical knowledge (*Vernunft*), an absolute knowledge of absolute reality, including or subsuming all relative positions as absolute spirit (an overarching, dispassionate objectivity purporting to include existing subjectivity within it). But such absolute knowledge, according to Kierkegaard, amounts to no more than content-less and hypothetical tautology: a dialectical conjugation, (as it were), of the verb 'to be' that stays within the objective reflection of an existing subject. When all the ramifications and variations of Hegel's supposedly metaphysical logic have been played out, therefore, no more is accomplished than an empty logical identity – the re-duplicative assertion that 'truth is'.<sup>105</sup> This idealised being of truth passes for Hegel as containing existence or actuality within itself, whereas empirical reality is simply by-passed. The Hegelian forgets his own subjective status, the concrete yet ever moving quality of his own being, not only in its day-to-day significance, but also in relation to divine judgement and salvation. On the other hand, Kierkegaard's divine paradox is that of an impossible 'object', the God-man, whose significance must be actively appropriated in a necessarily aesthetic or indirect manner as an 'object' that cannot be determinately known in principle.<sup>106</sup> Christian truth is actively appropriated through the 'how', the living mode of faith; a way of living one's finite life, a way of becoming or coming into infinite relatedness to a concretely manifested, yet eternal creator. As an infinite relation, therefore, the process of relating is necessarily un-finishable: death itself being only an intrinsically mysterious 'breaking off' from an observer's perspective.

There are thus two kinds of indeterminate, or aesthetic significance in play for Kierkegaard, not counting Judge William's ethically beautiful fidelity as properly independent, since, as shown,

<sup>102</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 564.

<sup>103</sup> Faith is seen as a paradox that nevertheless, paradoxically, one must unceasingly try to integrate into a pattern of living; a sustained, but above all responsive effort that is itself transformative is the life of faith according to Kierkegaard, as I shall be contending in the next section.

<sup>104</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 566.

<sup>105</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 190.

<sup>106</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, pp. 610-611.

for Kierkegaard, the ethical stage is incomplete in itself, only receiving a proper basis in relation to Christ.

A lower, artistic indeterminacy is focused on music as expressing the pre-linguistic conditions for verbal language. Kierkegaard uses an imagery of linguistic limits to express what is in effect a circular situation in the analysis of such indeterminacy, in which infantile or inchoate inarticulacy features as a beginning, while at the other extreme of sophistication, a return to inarticulacy is discovered. This return takes the form of a surrender of determinate meaning as poetry strives to become music in romantic subjectivist aesthetics.<sup>107</sup>

But a higher, existential indeterminacy is also put forward, in the form of a linguistically mediated awareness of Christ that has to employ conceptually indeterminate rhetorical or aesthetic features, or, as Shakespeare says, musical indirectness, in order to communicate a revelation in time but not of time. Communicating the Christological paradox demands a use of the imagination, demands a subjective effort. This activity takes the form of a response to Christ as an empirically manifest reality; and yet as an unknowable, impossible reality, a concrete union of the finite and the infinite. The resources of imagination thus have to be invoked in the apprehension and appropriation of the perspective of faith.

As will be suggested below in chapter two, according to M. Jamie Ferreira, the function of imagination is to hold disparate elements in a unity of tension. In the faithful response to Christological paradox, as in its communication, the finite and the infinite are grasped as united, not in a Hegelian synthesis, but in an act of imaginatively sustained tension.

In faith, therefore, indeterminate, imaginative activity is employed to sustain a mode of personal relation to the paradoxically incarnate Word of God. The musical expression of sensuous immediacy lies beneath language, and we have seen for Judge William that the aesthetic dimension of life only finds true fulfilment as the beauty of faithful human love. But ethical autonomy, as the sermon at the end of *Either/Or* begins to indicate, is ultimately an illusion, as our inward ethical task is found, in the response of faith, to be infinitely relational. Only in the life-long response to Christian revelation does the ethical life – and thus the human capacity to love – find its truly creative condition of possibility, and the human imaginative dimension its highest possibility for creative fulfilment in performance of the qualitative leap of faith. It is to this role of imagination in the Kierkegaardian leap of faith that I shall turn now.

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<sup>107</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, pp. 69-70.



## II

### A Kierkegaardian *impasse*: ‘inward’ imagination’s need for outward communication

Having considered Kierkegaard’s inward aesthetic of ethically imaginative reflection, in this chapter I address what is discernable as an important problem in relation to Kierkegaard’s position regarding the outwardly oriented aesthetics of art and natural beauty. I shall argue that this problem points to a serious structural difficulty at the heart of Kierkegaard’s project of the indirect communication of Christian truth.

#### (1) Kierkegaard and the imagination of inwardness

In her book *Transforming Vision*,<sup>108</sup> M Jamie Ferreira suggests that Kierkegaard’s writings show not only a preoccupation with imagination, but strongly affirm its ethical significance. Kierkegaard, for Ferreira, (whose account I shall be following in this section), expresses ‘a remarkable appreciation of the value and even necessity of imaginative activity for genuine self-development’.<sup>109</sup> Ferreira understands imagination to play a central role in religious conversion for Kierkegaard. Ferreira holds that the proper use of imagination, according to Kierkegaard, is always as imagination of ‘otherness’.<sup>110</sup> Hence Kierkegaard’s (or at least ‘A’s’) apparent concurrence with Hegelian views, as noted with reference to ‘The Musical Erotic’, that Schlegel’s ironising romanticism wrongly disallows any important significance to aesthetic *content*, focusing attention on the subject considered primarily as aesthetic ego. But while Kierkegaard’s paradoxical faith does, indeed, have objectivity, this is in the unique form of an impossible ‘object’, or one that cannot be determinately known through concepts under any circumstances, and which as a consequence always requires imaginative activity to be apprehended.

Ferreira argues against any understanding of the Kierkegaardian ‘leap of faith’ as a purely voluntary action, where this implies an action performed ‘on purpose’. Rather the leap is considered not as a purposeful decision to do something, but rather as a decision ‘that’ something is the case, that a qualitatively altered and thus different state of affairs pertains in light of the converted perspective. Such a transformation of perception is indeed deemed to be constitutive of the turn to faith.<sup>111</sup> Such a view may be seen to correspond with my earlier presentation of the importance attached to the ‘how’ of faith by Kierkegaard in which the claim

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<sup>108</sup> M. Jamie Ferreira, *Transforming Vision: Imagination and Will in Kierkegaardian Faith* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>109</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>110</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 7.

was made that the mode of mediation, or communication, of Christian truth is inseparable from the validity of the content so mediated. It is suggested that finite freedom, as Kierkegaard sees it, is situated between necessary compulsion and arbitrary wilfulness, the latter being regarded as an impossible, negative idea of freedom: the very conception attacked by Kierkegaard, as exemplified by the absolutisation of the individual aesthetic ego in romantic irony. Ferreira examines concepts of ‘leap’ and ‘passion’ in Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (both attributed to the pseudonym, Johannes Climacus) showing that these accounts qualify and correct one another, and that through his habitual correlation of the term ‘leap’ with the term ‘passion’, Kierkegaard indicates the crucial role of imagination in the subjective turn to faith.<sup>112</sup>

In examining this Kierkegaardian ‘transition to faith’, Ferreira finds that conversion involves a ‘qualitative shift’, or change in the quality of the convert’s perception insofar as his general life-orientation is concerned. Faith thus constitutes, and is constituted by, a perspectival shift. Kierkegaard’s use of the term ‘decision’ indicates that this subjective turn is a discreet and irreversible event: ‘a moment of embrace’. Kierkegaard regards subjective freedom as crucial in this movement of embrace, against a Hegelian deterministic translation of Christianity into speculative thought, which Kierkegaard regards as utterly alien to the real experience of faith. However, Ferreira insists that it is never Kierkegaard’s intention to suggest that the freedom of faith depends on an arbitrary act of will, starkly discontinuous with the rest of one’s experience of reality. Rather it is contended that reality as a whole is seen through a transformed perspective, through the eyes of faith. Dispensing, therefore, with any idea of direct sovereign decision-making as inadequate to explain the Kierkegaardian ‘leap’, Ferreira suggests that the concepts of ‘critical threshold’ and ‘qualitative shift’ help to clarify and protect the concept of freedom that she finds at work in the two ‘Climacus’ accounts analysed.<sup>113</sup>

### **(1.1) Between activity and passivity: Kierkegaard’s passionate willing**

Ferreira thus offers a ‘re-conceptualisation of the transition to faith’ which ‘challenges the relevance of the model of decision’ as purposeful choice:<sup>114</sup>

I suggest that Climacus’ understanding of faith, and Kierkegaard’s contribution to an anatomy of faith, is able to be adequately appreciated only when the concepts of ‘leap’ and ‘passion’ are seen as parallel, and are seen as mutually and substantively correcting and qualifying each other.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>112</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>113</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 15-18.

<sup>114</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 8.

<sup>115</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 9.

As distinct from theoretical knowledge, Kierkegaard's pseudonym writes that faith is not a knowledge: 'knowledge is either eternal or historical, not the absurdity that the eternal is the historical'.<sup>116</sup>

Faith in Christ is therefore a paradox in that it unites genuine contradictories. But it does so not as Hegelian sublation, in terms of a higher, logical synthesis of contraries. For Kierkegaard, contradictories are not merely polar or related opposites, and thus not contrary manifestations of a unifying and higher power. The Chalcedonian paradox – that as fully human, Jesus is fully divine, is both historical and eternal – is an actual and yet impossible 'both/and', not a merely conceptual harmonisation of an antithetical 'either/or', as antitheses which the Hegelian claims have only been partially grasped hitherto. Thus distrusting the possibility of speculative synthesis as Kierkegaard does, for him all true knowledge must be empirically based, must have its basis in sensation, and be subject to the philosophical principle of contradiction as defined in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*: 'it is impossible for the same thing at the same time both to be in and not to be in the same thing in the same respect'.<sup>117</sup> This is a basic rule of thought, of the mind's own way of working objectively, thus constituting a condition that must be satisfied for a knowledge claim to be upheld.

But for Ferreira, that Kierkegaard regards faith as a paradoxical 'both/and' position, one that holds contradictory positions at the same time about the same 'object', does not imply that he regards Christian faith as a purely arbitrary position, adopted purposefully against reason as a direct and wilfully irrational act of unilateral, purely subjective decision. The leap of faith is a qualitative shift in awareness, not a calculated 'fiat'. But at the same time, of course, the act of faith is not logically determined as something that compels one's will theoretically.<sup>118</sup> Kierkegaard's intention is, after all, to wrest the quality of faith – as irreducibly a matter of personally inward freedom – from the clutches of fashionable Hegelian thinking.

By stressing the individual's freedom in the turn to faith, Kierkegaard's pseudonym seeks to rule out both the logically quantifiable determinism whereby one position automatically falls into its own opposite – the 'movement' of Hegelian dialectic – as well as a position in which the subject's claim to knowledge is straightforwardly conditioned from without, that is,

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<sup>116</sup> Kierkegaard, Concluding Unscientific Postscript vol 1, p. 62; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 22.

<sup>117</sup> Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, Hugh Lawson-Tancred (tr.) (London, Penguin, 1998), 1005b, p.88. Accordingly, the orthodox standard of faith, the Christological definition of Chalcedon, is paradoxical in the full Kierkegaardian sense: '...one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognised in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence [ *ὑποστάσις* ], not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son...'; see Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder (eds.) *Documents of the Christian Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 56-57. For Antiochene and Alexandrian Christological traditions and the Chalcedonian settlement of A.D. 451, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (fifth edition), (London: Continuum, 1977), pp. 280-343.

<sup>118</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 22.

empirically conditioned. But nevertheless, an element of passivity in the movement from unbelief must be present, since, in *Philosophical Fragments*, Climacus contrasts faith not just with knowledge, but also to unconditioned volition.<sup>119</sup> Faith, as indirectly mediated or conditioned, must imply a conditioned activity of will, and thus the involvement of a passive element. Faith can thus be described as an act of freedom only to the extent that it is *not* unconditionally determined. Christian faith could not take the form of unconditionally free action, since there must be an element of constraint insofar as responsible faith is not the arbitrary creation of the subject, not a subjective and romanticist exercise in self-cultivation or self-development: the aesthetic stance of Schlegelian irony attacked by Kierkegaard.

Far from being an exercise in purely subjective construction, Christian faith claims to embody an encounter with an actual otherness in the unique form of an impossible objectivity. This element of constraint is what determines Climacus' faith as an infinite passion just as much as an active leap, although 'passion' is used in an ambiguous manner, since it serves to indicate not only the convert's affectedness by an infinite otherness, but also denotes the essence of the leaping activity that is actually inseparable from it (though separated for purposes of theoretical analysis in Ferreira's account). This is because Ferreira views the leap as an overmastering and passionate, imaginative 'outreach of the mind',<sup>120</sup> about which more will be said below. Ferreira's account reveals an aesthetic dimension at work in Kierkegaard's conception of Christian faith, which is thus identified as the form of life in which the aesthetic dimension of human existence ripens in a fulfilment over and above the beauty of faithful love, as seen from the perspective of Judge William's self-regulative ethics. Faith is thus neither a determinate knowledge, nor a purely spontaneous romantic construct, but a passionate leap: a qualitative shift in orientation to reality.

Kierkegaard's passionate leap of faith opposes the calculative cognitive necessity of Hegelian logic, while at the same time maintaining that essential features of the lower aesthetic and ethical spheres of existence are preserved at the level of faith. This preservation is not in the form of the quantifiable 'higher objectivity' of a Hegelian rational synthesis; rather it is a claim that the aesthetic faculty of human being is existentially transformed, meaning that subjective experience is infinitely re-orientated, and thus qualitatively transformed. In faith, inward life is qualitatively transformed as infinitely re-oriented through conceptually indeterminate, and thus aesthetic judgement. An overall change of existential perspective thus takes place, which as we progress will be shown to embody elements of 'gestalt-shift' and metaphor. The movement to faith is a move to the recognition of created-ness; that one's existence happens through an

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<sup>119</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 33.

<sup>120</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 23.



infinitely dependent relationship, or as Climacus metaphorically has it, that one's life floats 'out on 70,000 fathoms of water'.<sup>121</sup> Since existence, as infinitely, creatively related, is not a Kantian ethical autonomy – nor a Schlegelian aesthetic construction of the empirical ego, nor yet a Hegelian dialectical identity of subjectivity and absolute spirit – it follows that truly Christian existence implies the recognition of no calculable conceptual ground at all. Christian existence involves the awareness that one's life is indemonstrably and indeterminably grounded.

The term passion distinguishes faith from volition. As Kierkegaard writes in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*: 'Faith is not an act of will'.<sup>122</sup> Faith is always based on that which cannot be achieved through a sovereign act of will, which is to say, faith is pre-conditioned by and is a response to concrete yet supernatural revelation. The passion of which faith consists is neither willing, nor knowing; neither something which just occurs, nor that one achieves in pure spontaneity. Ferreira suggests that Kierkegaard's passion is itself, like its object, paradoxical, since both active and passive. The passion of faith is neither active nor passive purely, just as Kierkegaard describes the concomitant experience of a rational (Pauline) 'offence' as both a stance that one takes up and a reaction which one suffers.

Ferreira suggests that the sense of the word 'passion' envisaged by Kierkegaard is that of an 'eager outreach of the mind', an 'overmastering enthusiasm'.<sup>123</sup> This is far from pure passivity. As Aristotle argued, emotions or passions 'embody judgements', they do not simply accompany them. Thus emotions always have an active, cognitive element. Judgement, not pure affectivity, is what distinguishes emotions from one another.<sup>124</sup> Affectivity, as the bodily component, is inextricable from the judgement, and emotion is made up of both. For example, one could not experience fear (as distinct from anxiety) as differentiated from any other emotion, without some judgement of the immanent possibility of danger.<sup>125</sup>

Climacus, in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, refers to the transition to faith in terms of 'passion' and 'will' interchangeably, according to Ferreira. The passionate movement of faith is ambiguously both active and passive at once.<sup>126</sup> This is seen to be the case in the following passage. Referring to the leap of faith, Kierkegaard writes: 'That something in which [the leap] occurs is the happy passion of faith'.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>121</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 204.

<sup>122</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 62; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 23.

<sup>123</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 23.

<sup>124</sup> Aristotle, *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, Lane Cooper (tr.) (New York: Appleton-Century, 1932), 1: 10, pp. 56-57, 2: 1, p. 92; 2: 2, p. 93; 2: 5, p. 107; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>125</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 23.

<sup>126</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 27.

<sup>127</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol 1 p. 59; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 27.

Here ‘leap’ and ‘passion’ are identified, indicating that the event in question is neither purely subjective action nor something of which one is simply the passive recipient. There is subjective creativity involved in the movement of faith, therefore, just as much as faith is also a response to genuine otherness. Faith is thus not a purposeful, self-conscious decision to ignore the rightful demands of reason, some sort of calculated act of display in the form of a decision to identify oneself with an unthinkable paradox. Rather, ‘passion’ qualifies ‘leap’ in Climacus’ descriptions of the transition to faith, rendering untenable any interpretation of the ‘leap’ of faith in terms of an arbitrary act of will in despite of the understanding.

Climacus’ use of the term ‘passion’ as a corrective of ‘leap’ is explained as a holding together of opposites in imaginative activity, or imaginative effort. Indeed, it is in this sense of ‘effort’ that Kierkegaard employs the term ‘will’ in relation to paradoxical faith, thus directing the reader away from an identification of will with straightforward and unilateral decision-making. The leap of ethical passion – a tension of activity and passivity – is illustrated in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, thus:

If I could get [a man] seated on a horse and the horse made to take fright and gallop wildly, or better still, for the sake of bringing the passion out, if I could take a man who wanted to arrive at a certain place as quickly as possible, and hence already had some passion, and could get him astride a horse that could scarcely walk... Or if a driver were otherwise not specially inclined towards passion, if someone hitched a team of horses to a wagon for him, one of them a Pegasus and the other a worn out jade, and I told him to drive, I might succeed.<sup>128</sup>

The art of balancing Pegasus and the nag, steering a course with opposite tendencies, is the relation of infinity to finitude, eternity to time, involved in the leaping passion that is paradoxical faith.

### **(1.2) Between activity and passivity: Kierkegaard’s productive imagination**

In Kierkegaard’s broader account of truth as subjectivity in the ethical sphere as well as its infinite intensification in the sphere of paradoxical religion, Ferreira suggests that such holding of opposites in imaginatively productive tension is precisely the significance of ‘passion’ as Climacus here uses the term. Such passion is also and simultaneously an effort of will in the form of a willingness to sustain an imaginatively productive tension of opposites in and as the state of consciousness which is faith. Romantic concepts of metaphysical polarity (as in the systematic philosophical work of Coleridge, as we shall discover in later chapters), just like the

<sup>128</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 276; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 32.

Hegelian sublation of contraries addressed above, tends to stress an inherent and logical mutual co-implication, a necessary belonging-together of opposites, such as activity and passivity, subjectivity and objectivity. However, Kierkegaard (according to this reading) maintains that only strenuous, even violent and uncomfortable personal effort can generate sufficient imaginative tension to hold mutually repellent or contradictory aspects of consciousness together through the conceptuality of aesthetic indeterminacy.<sup>129</sup> In such a way a passionate effort of will must unceasingly or infinitely engage with the understanding (in a manner which shall shortly be explained) in the necessarily endless task for finite subjectivity of assimilating an infinite personal and revelation, impossibly beyond the limits of finite understanding.

In a lower existential sphere than that of paradoxical faith, the work of ethical self-realisation (in the second part of *Either/Or*) requires imaginative vision, since one's finite and on-going situation has to be 'seen' in terms of an infinite thought content that is related to an existential possibility for becoming, a possibility to be actively realised. Such is the on-going, temporal movement involved in choosing oneself ethically: not a direct decision to do something, but an indirect decision, requiring imaginative mediation. One might describe this existential concept of imaginative decision as a decision that one will try to act and behave according to a certain self-image. But such an image is not to be thought of as a picture held at a distance to which one occasionally refers to take one's bearings. Rather, according to Kierkegaard's Judge William, one becomes 'transparent', as Kierkegaard has it,<sup>130</sup> to the ethical possibility entertained; through the use of imagination, one sees oneself as or in light of such ethical possibility. In Kierkegaard's phrase, concrete life is thus permeated with ethical consciousness.<sup>131</sup>

Thus in its ethical deployment, as raised to the higher sphere of subjective inwardness, Kierkegaard's aesthetic stresses the role of imagination as holding together infinite and finite elements in a concrete, living tension. Imaginative 'concretising' as a developmental deepening of inwardness is thus contrasted with the aesthetics of artistic imaginative representation, which can draw attention away from everyday ethical demands. A life unduly focused on the external aesthetics of art or natural beauty is thus regarded as in a certain sense a flight from ethical reality. However, he who would become an ethical subject sees himself in terms of a persuasive otherness: an imaginatively envisioned, existential alternative.

<sup>129</sup> The issue of imagination as key to the structure of paradoxical faith will be addressed shortly.

<sup>130</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 2, pp. 253-256.

<sup>131</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 32, 65-68. See also Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 2, p. 256: 'The person who views life ethically sees the universal, and the person who lives life ethically expresses the universal in his life. He makes himself the universal human being, not by taking off his concretion, for then he becomes a complete non-entity, but by putting it on and interpenetrating it with the universal...the ethical individual...has come to the point where he has become the unique human being – that is there is no other human being like him – and he has also become the universal human being'. Such is the intended sense of my expression concerning the permeation of concrete life with ethical consciousness, above.



We have seen how the leap of faith may be thought as a qualitative change rather than a quantifiable or discreet act. Climacus writes in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* of a ‘leap of continuity’, a breach of immanence’. These expressions serve to describe a move from non-belief to faith which is not an ‘immediate transition’, as Ferreira puts it.<sup>132</sup> This is to say that the qualitative leap of faith is not a voluntary choice between options, as would be expressed in a purposeful and quantitatively discreet act of will. In line with the description of ‘choosing oneself’ ethically outlined above in terms of the permeation of concrete individuality with consciousness of ethical possibility – seeing oneself as a certain type of individual in the reshaping of one’s activity – Ferreira suggests that Climacus similarly understands the paradoxical leap of faith as a qualitative shift in consciousness involving imaginative activity. It is then suggested that faith’s ‘infinite passion’ as such an imaginative transformation of perspective, takes the form of a gestalt shift. It is to this issue – shedding light on the specific role of imagination in paradoxical faith – I shall now turn.

### **(1.3) Kierkegaard’s Wittgensteinian ‘gestalt’-shifts and the imaginative transformation of experience**

Ferreira writes that ‘in a situation in which a gestalt shift can occur, initially we can see only one possibility’, for example, a picture of a duck.<sup>133</sup> But, ‘at some point, after concentrated attention, or perhaps after coaxing and guidance, another alternative (a rabbit figure) comes into focus for us’.<sup>134</sup> Ferreira holds that this transition to a new perspective or perceptive standpoint is not and cannot be directly willed, although the effort of imaginative concentration will be hard at work. Through such effort, this qualitative transition emerges or dawns as the indirect result of a conscious wish to see things differently.<sup>135</sup> Choices are made between alternatives, and since at first viewing no alternative is perceived, the shift in perspective cannot be called a choice. Since we cannot force ourselves to see what, if it happens at all, will just come to us, the movement in which such an altered perception occurs must involve passivity as well as effort, a transition in which the operation of imagination manifests as a productive tension between

<sup>132</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 34.

<sup>133</sup> Walter Ehrenstein, ‘Untersuchungen über Figur-Grund-Fragen’, *Zeitschrift für Psychologie*, 117, pp. 339-412.

<sup>134</sup> Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (third edition), G. E. M. Anscombe (tr.) (Blackwell: Oxford, 2001) part II, §xi, pp.165-194. Wittgenstein distinguishes within a continuity of immediate visual perception (focused on a dual-aspect ‘puzzle-picture’) the ‘dawning’ awareness of a totally different ‘aspect’ or organisation of the whole (= ‘gestalt’), the perceptual data remaining absolutely unchanged. Wittgenstein writes: ‘The expression of a change of aspect is the expression of a new perception and at the same time of the perception’s being unchanged...My visual impression has changed and now I recognise it has not only shape and colour but a quite particular ‘organisation’, – my visual impression has changed; – what was it like before and what is it like now? – If I represent it by means of an exact copy – and isn’t that a good representation of it? – no change is shewn’ (p. 167). The visual example Wittgenstein offers is a familiar dual-aspect picture offering images of a duck and a rabbit – exclusively of one another and each one co-extensive with the whole presentation – without any alteration in the visible elements of the design . A similar example is that of a vase in silhouette which is alternatively two profiles facing one another .

<sup>135</sup> As Wittgenstein insists, the visual content remains continuous and unchanging in the altered perception of a double-aspect picture. Yet the dawning of a new perception occurs without the direct mediation of conscious thought. Indeed, the puzzle-experiment shows that conceptual interpretation cannot lead directly to the perception of an alternative form for the same content. Since on the other hand, no visible change occurs in the image itself, Ferreira suggests that such formal or organisational alteration can be viewed as the work of imagination, regarded as a medium for the formal unification of consciousness that is not under direct volitional control.

active and passive poles of experience, a paradoxical effort of letting-happen, as a qualitatively different insight into the perceptual reality in question emerges.<sup>136</sup>

In gestalt-shifts, after a certain intrinsically unpredictable point a transition occurs in consciousness and this may be viewed as a ‘culmination’ of previous factors (e.g. the personal effort involved, the prodding by others). But it is not of the same qualitative order as the state of consciousness that preceded it. In crossing from one perceptual possibility to another, a ‘critical threshold’ is reached.<sup>137</sup> Just as water turns to vapour after a certain critical temperature is reached, so the imaginative ‘activity’<sup>138</sup> on our part paradoxically delivers *to us* a new perception, which we could be said to receive passively. Imagination is thus viewed as a tension between activity and passivity, as well being capable of delivering insight by holding in polar tension disparities such as infinity and finitude. The crossing of the critical threshold is tellingly characterised by Kierkegaard as a ‘leap’ in consciousness: ‘the leap by which water turns to ice, the leap by which I understand an author and the leap which is the transition from good to evil’.<sup>139</sup> The journal extract just cited occurs in a discussion of qualitatively different varieties of leap. But Kierkegaard goes on to maintain that, qualitatively different though these examples may be, they are all relatively homogeneous in comparison to the leap by which the infinite God enters into finitude.

The incarnation of Christ is the only non-homogeneous leap, for Kierkegaard, as of an infinite order. All Kierkegaard’s other examples are similar by analogy, and there is therefore a continuity between them relative to one another, as range-able on a quantitative scale of finite comparison. The infinity of God is however off any possible scale, supporting it. There is therefore a discontinuity – a divine, and thus infinite revelatory approach – but also a continuity in the form of subjective receptivity is admitted in Kierkegaard’s account. The human aspect of conversion is comparable with other kinds of human and non-human, but finite, transition.<sup>140</sup> The infinite relatedness of Christian faith, its difference from all other existential relations, is due to a divine initiative. Faith is therefore not a *sui generis* phenomenon because of any interesting characteristics of the believer. Unlike Schlegelian subjectivity, faith is a possibility for everyone, regardless of talent, and independent of any temperamental factors in the individual. Faith is a non-volitional – not arbitrarily and directly willed – imaginative response in the existential or inward aesthetic mode, and is thus ethico-aesthetic. Such ethico-aesthetic

<sup>136</sup> The quality of experience and not its visible quantity is transformed. At the same time no conceptual determination directly leads to the transition of awareness. No willing and no act of direct judgement can allow the mind to perceive a new formal patterning of the sensory content, and yet imaginative effort is involved in what cannot be made to happen, but will simply occur.

<sup>137</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 34.

<sup>138</sup> Scare-quotes are used to indicate that the imaginative effort is not a directly purposeful act.

<sup>139</sup> H.V. & E. H. Hong (ed.), *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers* 7 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975) vol. 3, p. 17

<sup>140</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 35.

activity was introduced in the last chapter through Judge William's account of the role of faithful love in an autonomous ethical existence, in opposition to the outward aesthetic mode which externalises the subject, alienating him from himself and from ethical relations with others. The aesthete was found to be focused away from his concrete status, losing himself in an infinitely unattainable ideal of beauty. But as was seen earlier, the ethical ideal of right behaviour is also intrinsically unattainable, and in need of divine grace. Kierkegaard shows how aesthetic and ethical concerns are retained and transformed in the imaginative life of paradoxical faith.

On the human side of the revelatory encounter, an infinite qualitative shift of 'aspect' takes the form of a non-compelled recognition. But this is still a conditioned response, analogical in kind to the grasp that one might suddenly just find oneself having of the meaning of a difficult poem upon a second reading. Such an uncompelled achievement of meaningful insight is the work of imagination, holding disparate semantic elements or aspects of the poem together in a tensile or dynamically interactive unity. In a similar way, the qualitative leap of faith is 'so to speak, a creative culmination rather than a mechanical accumulation'.<sup>141</sup>

However, the leap of faith, as an imaginative leap of insight, is not simply a matter of gestalt shift or change of aspect. It is importantly different from the experience of Wittgenstein's 'duck/rabbit' picture since one cannot move backwards and forwards from one image to the other at will. As pointed out already, a critical threshold is crossed, and therefore the model of gestalt shift needs to be balanced by a model of metaphor, through which a lasting re-conceptualisation of reality occurs.

A metaphor holds in imaginative tension an object from one semantic field with aspects of another, allowing the first to be seen in terms of the second. Ferreira writes that such re-conceptualisation is what allows metaphorical operations to be irreducible cognitive advances.<sup>142</sup> The non-reversible achievement of re-conceptualisation in a metaphorical shift in perspective is the result of a *sustained* maintenance in tension of distinct frames of reference. This endurance and persistence distinguishes metaphorical transformations from simple gestalt shifts, as well as highlighting the specific role of imagination as a holding-in-tension of disparate elements. There is an irreversible aspect involved in the transition to faith in that a definite advance in consciousness occurs. Whereas with aspect-seeing, one can flip between one image and the other indifferently and at will once the ability to see the second possibility has dawned upon one non-volitionally, a metaphorical translation enables a new situation to

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<sup>141</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 36.

<sup>142</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 79.

supervene, as a non-reversible advance in consciousness. This cognitive advance is not however the result of pure thinking or empirical observation, but largely the result of imaginative seeing: a new way of relating to the world around one has come into play. Just as Kierkegaard's pseudonymous, indirect writings can steer one towards faith – offering one a translation, an alternative interpretation of existence – but cannot themselves perform the personal transition, the personal embrace of the perspective of faith, so neither can one directly choose to embrace that offer of an altered relationship to reality as a whole, as inhabited from the perspective of infinite personal relatedness to its founder. If and when it arrives, the transition to faith will be a qualitative change of perspective that is unlike a gestalt shift in that, through being at home in the language of faith as now one's own mode of infinite relatedness, a new way of living has been embraced, a new language and mode of engagement with reality learned. Thus a personal and situational advance in awareness has occurred through an imaginative mediation over which conceptual and voluntary factors have no direct control.<sup>143</sup>

#### **(1.4) Imagination's ethical suspension of the understanding**

The personal embrace or transition to an imaginatively entertained possibility of paradoxical faith – a newly perceived translation of the world, a tension of finitude as seen in the light of infinity, offering the prospect of a new life 'suspended over 70,000 fathoms' – demands yet another effort of imagination.<sup>144</sup>

Ferreira cites the example of learning a foreign language to enable insight into his meaning. At some point I will stop translating a foreign language in order to understand it, and will have made the transition to thinking in that language. But this will not be by a direct act of will. Similarly, the imaginative embrace of the 'new language' of faith is not the result of a direct volition. In paradoxical faith, as in assimilating another language, the transition, the assimilation, requires a passive element. Ferreira suggests that for Climacus, this takes the form of a surrender of understanding.<sup>145</sup> But the paradox will not cease to be paradoxical once faith has been embraced. The understanding's judgement upon the paradox will still be valid, meaning that the understanding, through imaginative activity, will be simultaneously affirmed *and* suspended, judging and desisting. The understanding will be both active and passive in imaginative tension, or suspension.<sup>146</sup> The role of inward or moral imagination is to bracket out accustomed prejudices in order to entertain new possibilities for interaction with others.<sup>147</sup> Here,

<sup>143</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 76-81.

<sup>144</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, vol. 1, p. 204.

<sup>145</sup> See Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, 48-51.

<sup>146</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 76-81. See Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>147</sup> Here Ferreira is partly following Iris Murdoch's account of moral imagination, in which, she says, Murdoch attempts 'in ethics to replace a model of "choice" by a model of "vision"'. Ferreira understands Murdoch to suggest that imagination 'transcends the dualism between active and passive'. Ferreira follows Murdoch in arguing that 'the activity of imagination is neither simply active

the old way of moral ‘seeing’ is not simply abandoned, but customary judgemental tendencies are suspended.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, a Kierkegaardian ‘letting go’ of the understanding demands that elements be held in an imaginative tension or suspension, as an integral part of the movement to paradoxical faith.<sup>149</sup>

Ferreira identifies this imaginative suspension with what Climacus describes as the ‘captivity’ of the understanding. To be thus suspended is for the understanding to be simultaneously present and non-active. Climacus’ use of ‘captivity’, as a term describing the predicament of the understanding in the turn to faith, implies passivity.<sup>150</sup> But Climacus also refers to the non-annihilation of the understanding,<sup>151</sup> contrasting the position of faith in relation to the understanding with something that just happens.<sup>152</sup> Without the understanding’s active presence, there could be no recognition of the paradox *as* paradox. This non-annihilation of the understanding must therefore be involved in a tension with its being taken captive.<sup>153</sup> What Climacus describes as the ‘crucifixion of the understanding’<sup>154</sup> in the life of faith is not achieved simply by setting the understanding on one side; Kierkegaard writes that ‘one must have it [understanding] in order to believe anything against understanding’.<sup>155</sup> Ferreira claims that the notion of ‘suspension’ conceived as such an unfocused presence elucidates Climacus’ idea of the ‘captivity’ of the understanding. Rather than simply followed or denied, the understanding is present in faith, but as de-emphasised: an observer taking note but hovering in the background, as it were. Thus the paradox of faith is embraced in the imaginative tension in which the understanding is present in suspense. Climacus’ qualitative leap of faith is a situation, therefore, in which the understanding ‘wills its own downfall’.<sup>156</sup> The understanding is held – in full consciousness – in suspended animation, deciding neither for nor against the paradox, but aware of it as paradox.

Endeavouring to communicate the subtlety of an experience of imaginative tension that is both active and passive, and yet neither purely, as is envisioned in the relation to paradoxical revelation, Ferreira looks at art appreciation, as understood by C. S. Lewis in his *Experiment in Criticism*.<sup>157</sup> Lewis suggests that ‘the first demand any artwork makes upon us is surrender’.<sup>158</sup> Whether a given work deserves the act of surrender will not be known until one has performed

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nor simply passive: it is like “seeing”, a kind of reflection and a kind of exploring at the same time’. Ferreira cites Murdoch’s article ‘The Darkness of Practical Reason’, *Encounter*, 27, (1966). Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>148</sup> See Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 49-50.

<sup>149</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 86.

<sup>150</sup> See Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 48.

<sup>151</sup> Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 48.

<sup>152</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 87.

<sup>153</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 87.

<sup>154</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 503.

<sup>155</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 503; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 89.

<sup>156</sup> Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 49.

<sup>157</sup> C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961).

<sup>158</sup> C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, p. 61; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 117.



it. Such an act of surrender is an imaginative act of passivity. In a similar way, when one is offended by something, offence is also a stance which one takes up for oneself. The surrender of the understanding in faith is an act which cannot be performed at will. Ferreira writes: ‘the tension between active and passive embodied in the concept of surrender expresses itself in a response which as such is both our action and dependent on the power of the attraction of something outside us’.<sup>159</sup> Thus such a non-volitional surrender – whether considered aesthetically, emotionally or in the revelatory relation of paradoxical faith – takes the active/passive form of an act of engagement.

Surrender and engagement always occur together in active-passive tension. We do not actively choose to be engaged by a given event, but find ourselves engaged.<sup>160</sup> The transition to faith, described by Climacus as ‘infinitely interested’, is just such an instance of imaginative engagement, in which we find ourselves engaged by infinite ‘otherness’: ‘subjectivity is infinitely interested’. In the imaginative tension, the active-passivity of faith, imagination as infinite passion is interested in what has attracted it as a personal possibility for becoming. This mode of imaginative relation stands in contrast to the disinterested, objective mode of thought in which imaginative tension is missing. Kierkegaard writes that in the objective relation to the truth, instead of engaging with a content of consciousness as a possible pattern of behaviour which one might manifest through one’s life, as actively informing one’s life, the content of thought ‘has been turned one-sidedly into possibility’.<sup>161</sup>

To consent to faith is thus to let the attractiveness of an option – the divine approach – win out, to take the risk of openness to faith’s persuasiveness and, as Lewis points out, whether this is the right move to make can be known only after the relation of imaginative engagement has been entered into, or after we have suspended active resistance and let the event of the paradox ‘happen’ to us and for us. Faith is an activity in so far as it is an imaginatively attentive listening to an infinite personal address. On this model of Christian faith, to ‘will’ is to want for oneself the appeal of this impossibility. In faith, one wants to embrace this personal address as one’s own-most possibility, through the effort of imaginative tension in which one engages with an infinite and yet personally related otherness. To ‘will’ a leap of faith, therefore, is *not* to take an arbitrary leap into a purely subjective and fideistic form of imaginative wish fulfilment.

In this section we have seen thus far that imagination mediates a productive tension of opposites as active and passive tendencies, as well as subjective and objective viewpoints, interact in a transition to the life of faith. In conversion, the imagination enables a ‘qualitative shift’, or

<sup>159</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 117.

<sup>160</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 117.

<sup>161</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 23; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 126.

change in the quality of the convert's perception in engaging with the world. Faith thus constitutes, and is constituted by, an imaginative transformation of experience in response to an unknowable yet revealed otherness. Kierkegaard's use of the term 'decision' indicates that this transformation is a discreet and irreversible event, but through an embrace of the unknowable, rather than a self-willed act.

We saw in the last chapter not only Kierkegaard's condemnation of 'totalising' philosophical positions such as Hegel's, but also his criticism of fideistic religious claims to possess the truth exclusively. A recognition of the impossibility of containing transcendence within a human conceptual scheme – such as Hegel's – is related to the recognition that any claims to possession of ultimate truth – whether philosophical or ecclesial – can lead to possessiveness and the attempt to control the lives of others. Claims to final possession of the truth tend to be ethically manipulative and idolatrous. I shall be arguing in the following chapters from a theological premiss that ethical receptivity to the full force of God's saving judgement upon one's biases, pre-occupations and pre-conceptions is of primary significance in Christian faith, demanding imaginative openness and patience in attempting to discern the truth, in all the relations of daily life.

This conviction that a personal divine revelation permeates and transforms ordinary living is what distinguishes Kierkegaard's account from a prominent tendency in thinking about transcendence after Kant, as we are about to see. However, it will also be suggested that Kierkegaard's division of activities appropriate to different existential spheres or levels works against his central, incarnational insight.

## **(2) Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and Wittgenstein: a Reflection**

As mentioned earlier, Kierkegaard's aesthetic and metaphysical insights are remarkably close to Schopenhauer's – a fact noted late in his brief life by Kierkegaard himself<sup>162</sup> – although the two writers assess these insights in diametrically opposing ways. Similarities to Kierkegaard's position in the earlier thought of Wittgenstein – which was, at least in overarching vision, greatly influenced by Schopenhauer – will be briefly addressed at this point, as the discovery of the crucial difference between the positions of Kierkegaard and Wittgenstein helpfully illumines the nature of Kierkegaard's concern with paradoxical faith. This reflection will thereby serve to set Kierkegaard's thought apart from the tendency in certain strands of romantic thought to deny the efficacy of moral and aesthetic values within the sphere of everyday life; a tendency whose presence can be traced in the work of Schlegel, Schopenhauer

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<sup>162</sup> Søren Kierkegaard, *Papers and Journals: a Selection*, Alastair Hannay (tr.) (London: Penguin, 1996), pp. 581-585.

and the early Wittgenstein. But more importantly, this reflection will help to highlight and situate the theological problem which I detect in the work of Kierkegaard, and which the rest of this thesis will set out to address.

In ‘The Musical Erotic’, we have seen in chapter one that the author writes about Mozart’s music in a lyrical and evocatively poetic style, thus utilising the resources of one of the polar opposites (the other being inchoate, pre-linguistic cries) between which the range of determinate meaning lies. The writer illustrates his difficulty in presenting purely indeterminate, musical content by attempting to make a survey of its ‘geographical’ outline.<sup>163</sup> Kierkegaard tries to trace the ‘shape’ of musical content, as that which lies across the frontiers of verbal discourse – from a position necessarily on the linguistic side of the border. The shape of the territory of music (and thus also of its correlate, subjective and immediate vitality) is intimated through Kierkegaard’s use of a profusion of unrelated and sometimes conflicting linguistic figures. By stretching lyricism to the edge of incoherence as he gestures towards purely musical, non-verbal significance, Kierkegaard delineates the limits of verbal language.

Rather than attempting, like Kierkegaard, to communicate the transcendent through imaginative indirection, Wittgenstein claims that ‘what we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.’ Wittgenstein, in his *Tractatus*,<sup>164</sup> traces in his own way the limits of meaningful language, in order to render Schopenhauer’s metaphysical vision in terms of logical atomism.<sup>165</sup> Schopenhauer himself, as we have seen, equates music with absolute truth, a language above language embodying the metaphysical will-in-itself, as if music constituted another world whose concrete content is only palely translated into the conceptuality of his own philosophy. While the endlessness of dynamic desire and its musical language lie beneath verbal language for Kierkegaard, concepts, as merely pale abstractions from reality, cannot even begin to approach the experience of metaphysical truth through music for Schopenhauer, influenced as he is by the romantic concept of music as a sublime intimation of absolute truth.<sup>166</sup> Wittgenstein agrees with Schopenhauer: ‘there are indeed many things that cannot be put into words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical’.<sup>167</sup>

Writing on Kierkegaard, Edward Mooney notes as follows: ‘Barth wrote that Mozart’s music was itself a ‘parable of the kingdom’ and that even a dog could be a parable of the kingdom – meaning a repetition of scripture in which one is given back in a new way, as a gift, words (or

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<sup>163</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, 66-67.

<sup>164</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, D. F. Pears & B. F. McGuinness (tr.) (London: Routledge, 2002), 7, p. 89.

<sup>165</sup> See Brian Magee’s *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), chapter 14.

<sup>166</sup> Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 72-75.

<sup>167</sup> Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.522, p. 89. Wittgenstein’s italics.

events or things) that one had thought to have grown stale'.<sup>168</sup> Mooney suggests a Wittgensteinian parallel for Kierkegaard's indirect writing strategy; a strategy conceived as the intimation or 'parable' of the objectively unsayable – the kingdom of God:

Wittgenstein claimed that when you purchased his *Tractatus*, you were missing the real book, the one on ethics that was outside *Tractatus* and couldn't (logically) be written. Perhaps Kierkegaard is always pointing to a book that it is impossible to write, a non-book we'd have to remain silent about. Meanwhile, he'll write books by pseudonyms, hinting, thereby, that his real 'Tractatus' resides elsewhere.<sup>169</sup>

I would suggest, though, however instructive this comparison may be, (and there are certainly parallels in indirect approach), that Kierkegaard differs from the early Wittgenstein in that he would affirm the reality and efficacy of supernatural activity in the empirical sphere, not evacuating it to some trans-empirical realm of value. Whereas Wittgenstein's realm of value transcends logic, Kierkegaard's revelation of the God-man is at the heart of the empirical world in spite of its logical impossibility for the understanding that relates to that world. The 'un-say-ability' of ultimate value or revelation belongs to a paradoxical and personal actuality, not to a non-empirical realm. Indeed Wittgenstein suggests in the *Tractatus* (following Schopenhauer) that the truly 'ethical' state of mind must lie outside of the contingencies of human interaction, as some form of unique and purely intellectual illumination or gnosis. For the early Wittgenstein, therefore, and unlike Kierkegaard, the realm of aesthetic and ethical value is excluded from verbal discourse as beyond the logic of language, and in this Wittgenstein's thinking also resembles that of Friedrich Schlegel, who, as we saw in the last chapter, writes on the impossibility of a full revelation of absolute truth.

We saw that, for Schlegel, the task of the romantic poet is unachievable in principle. In seeking to evoke the absolute through artistic singularity, or a uniquely individual perspective, the poet is also embarking on a self-critical procedure by which he simultaneously cancels or 'deconstructs' his work's claims to any transcendent significance through an ironic detachment from the content of his own creativity.<sup>170</sup> Thus the poet expresses an awareness of the fragmentary nature of any finite aesthetic product. So too, for Wittgenstein, ultimate significance can have no practical bearing on the phenomenal order, his Tractarian logic rigorously enforcing an absence of divine efficacy. For Schopenhauer, too, and – as the immediate source for the metaphysical vision behind Wittgenstein's position – in a similar way, there is no prospect of divine salvation, and all our striving is ultimately no more than pointless illusion. Thus we can discern a thematic continuity flowing from Friedrich Schlegel, through Schopenhauer, to the early Wittgenstein, according to which there is an empirically

<sup>168</sup> See Edward F. Mooney, *Søren Kierkegaard: Dialogue, Polemics, Lost Intimacy and Time*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 36-7.

<sup>169</sup> Mooney, *Søren Kierkegaard*, pp. 36-7.

<sup>170</sup> Hammermeister, *The German Aesthetic Tradition*, pp. 84-5.

transcendent significance, but it has no role to play in the business of everyday life, and certainly no involvement in its pain and anguish.

Against the nihilistic danger posed to ethical commitment by Schlegel's romantic irony, Kierkegaard, as we have seen, stresses ethico-religious, subjective inwardness as the province of the revealed, transcendent and paradoxical 'Word'. Kierkegaard sees faith as a pattern of living interaction that cannot be communicated directly, as pointing towards the impossible possibility of divine salvation in the here and now. Yet I will now argue that it is precisely this distinctively Christian claim, so powerfully advanced by Kierkegaard, which is resisted by a certain aspect of his own thinking. I suggest that a problematic tendency acts as a counter-current to the main direction of Kierkegaard's presentation of incarnational redemption.

The problem may be stated thus: if the aesthetic sphere, in its characteristic outward orientation as natural vitality is that which stands outside of revelation, or in opposition to it, as suggested by the figures of Don Giovanni and Faust in 'The Musical Erotic', then Kierkegaard's model of redemptive grace amounts, in effect, to no more than a moral demand: another Law. It is ultimately this theological objection which underlies the questioning in this thesis of Kierkegaard's inconsistent denial of a role for art and the aesthetics of natural beauty in Christian life; a life which nevertheless he can only communicate through poetic indirection. A stark segregation of the natural from the ethico-religious life would appear to apply in both cases. Such segregation is perhaps an extreme result of Kierkegaard's anti-Hegelian dichotomising, his refusal of the conceptual mediation or sublation of opposites addressed earlier. This theological objection must now be more closely examined.

As we have seen, Kierkegaard maintains that music perfectly represents 'the sensuous in its elemental originality'. What Kierkegaard goes on to say in 'The Musical Erotic' is strongly reminiscent of Schopenhauer's account of music in relation to the endless – and mindless – surging of metaphysical will towards its own increase. I have suggested that both thinkers – Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer – point towards what Heidegger regards as the essence of Nietzsche's philosophy. Nietzsche's 'will to power' is analysed by Heidegger as fundamentally a 'will to will' – a will that 'wills its own willing' to begin all over again *ad infinitum*. Thus I would suggest that Kierkegaard shares with Schopenhauer a conviction concerning the ultimate meaninglessness of sensuousness or natural vitality. Earlier, the question was raised whether there might be a connection between the constant and deepening repetition of 'inward' movement involved in the turn to Christ, and the circle of the ungovernable and purposeless striving of natural vitality that is represented by Kierkegaard's conception of sensuous immediacy. I suggested that there must be such a link between aesthetic or pre-ethical life and

the life of faith, if the Christian doctrine of redemption through divine incarnation is to be upheld. We saw in the last chapter, in relation to the archetypal figures of Don Giovanni and Faust, that the aesthetic life is understood by 'A' in two aspects: as pre-Christian natural vitality and as that same natural vitality as excluded by Christian revelation, or sin. This suggests that redemption would involve the repudiation or abandonment of the aesthetic as an outward orientation – or in manifestations of natural vitality *per se* – altogether. Yet thus to exclude the aesthetic sphere in its characteristically outward bearing, or as natural vitality, from Christianity is surely to exclude the very possibility of any redemption of fallen nature – human and non-human. But it is this redemptive possibility that constitutes the heart of the Christian message. One might go so far as to say that this possibility is the Christian message. As Gregory Nazianzen writes 'that which was not assumed [i.e., fully entered into by God in Christ] is not healed; but that which is united to God is saved'.<sup>171</sup>

It is not being suggested, of course, that Kierkegaard is unaware of this central tenet – the Christian tenet *ne plus ultra*; far from it. But I do argue that in *Stages on Life's Way* no less than in 'The Musical Erotic', Kierkegaard's exclusion of all outward aesthetic vitality – including outward, poetic imagination – from the life of faith contradicts his concern to communicate a saving incarnation; a communication which demands from him the use of an outward aesthetic conceptuality of semantic indeterminacy. It is being argued that the account of the relation between spirit and natural desire in 'The Musical Erotic' leaves human vitality in all its outwardly aesthetic expressions unredeemed, as outside of spirit. The context of musical philosophy can shed further light on this issue.

Schopenhauer, as we have learned, sees aesthetics through the romantic experience of art, according to which music is the language of the ineffable, the language above language.<sup>172</sup> Such views gave rise to a fully fledged 'art religion' in the nineteenth century (inspiring the music dramas of Wagner, for example), and Dahlhaus, in his *Idea of Absolute Music*, is unsure whether that move represents the secularisation of religion or a feeling for the sacramentality of the secular. We have seen from his music criticism in the first part of *Either/Or* that such a

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<sup>171</sup> St Gregory of Nazianzus, 'Ad Cledonium', *Select Letters of Gregory Nazianzen, Sometime Archbishop of Constantinople*, Charles Gordon Brown & James Edward Swallow (tr.) (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1893). See also Saint Athanasius (Archibald Robinson (ed.), *Select Writings and Letters of Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891): 'His flesh before all others was saved and liberated, as being the Word's body; and henceforth we, becoming incorporate with it, are saved after his pattern', (Discourse II, *Contra Arianos*, Chapter XX, § 61)). This orthodox theological line has its Scriptural roots in St Paul, for example, Romans 3.9-31, 5.8, 5.9, 5.12, 5.18-21, 7.13. In such passages St. Paul meditates on the relation between sin and law considered as consciousness of sin. I suggest that Kierkegaard's account of the relation between spirit and natural desire in 'The Musical Erotic' leaves human vitality unredeemed, as outside of spirit. Surely this is the relation between law and sin, not a description of the redemption of the sinner. See also 1 Corinthians 15.55-6 on Christ's snatching of victory from the jaws of death itself. On the 'classic', or 'ransom' view of Atonement, death or the forces of destruction cannot cancel out divine love as embodied in the incarnate Christ. For proponents of Nicene orthodoxy such as Sts Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus, this means that man can be redeemed – and all creation through him, by God's entering into the deepest darkness of the human condition in order to nullify its power. Christ's death thus destroys our death. For a profound consideration of the implications of divine suffering and redemption, see Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>172</sup> Dahlhaus, *Nineteenth Century Music*, pp. 72-5.

claim for the supreme theological significance of purely instrumental or ‘absolute’ music is strongly denied by Kierkegaard’s aesthetic pseudonym: ‘I have never had a sympathy [...] for the sublimated music that thinks it does not need words. Ordinarily, it thinks itself as superior to words, although it is inferior’.<sup>173</sup> Comparing this musical-critical attitude with the views prevailing in the *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, we can see that the aesthete’s view of music accords with a sharp differentiation between the spheres of paradoxical faith and the outwardly aesthetic life of intellectual and emotional pleasure; any aesthetically external or outward expression, it would seem, is beneath the life of faith. And yet there is a problem here, since Kierkegaard is writing at all because he sees a genuine need to communicate the gospel through personal indirection, that is, to express himself outwardly through the conceptual indeterminacy of aesthetic communications.

It will be a major contention in this thesis that genuine *ethical* receptivity to transcendence is necessarily allied to an *aesthetic* or imaginative mode of receptivity, as divine communication cannot but be distorted by a univocal and determinate use of, and relation to, concepts. The gospel, as Kierkegaard sees it, is infinite paradox, and thus cannot be contained in any finitely determined communication. As Saint Paul writes,<sup>174</sup> the liberating spirit and the constraining letter of the word of God need to be distinguished, if blasphemous bibliolatry is to be avoided; if one is not to be one of Climacus’s ‘zealots’ and ‘enthusiasts’.<sup>175</sup>

So, Kierkegaard points to music as a deficient discourse, denying the possibility of art’s having a sacramental character. Art in general is regarded as something far beneath the level of ethico-religious language. But we have also seen, in chapter one, that Kierkegaard utilises aesthetically indeterminate communication in the service of a higher existential sphere based on the revelation of paradox. As we saw then, Steven Shakespeare suggests that just as music, the communication of the dynamic of pre-reflected life, must idealise sensuous immediacy as its communication, and is thus itself spiritually qualified, so the communication of paradoxical faith as an existential orientation, must exploit the poetical, aesthetic possibilities inherent in verbal language for a musically indirect style of communication; possibilities made available by the very condition of linguistic ideality as always dependently rooted in reality, interpreting it.

By emphasising the exclusion not only of objective philosophy, but of art, music and poetry from the life of faith, Kierkegaard argues polemically to combat a threatened aesthetic replacement of genuine Christian practice by philosophy and art. In this, Kierkegaard offers a much needed theological service, but it must also be said that he thus appears to condone the

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<sup>173</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, part 1, pp. 69-70.

<sup>174</sup> 2 Corinthians 3.6.

<sup>175</sup> See chapter 1 section 3.4.

marginalisation of his own powerful and acute artistic ability and sensibility, and especially, and most importantly, the genuine evangelical potential of his own practice of musically indirect communication. Nevertheless, it may be that attention to other aspects of Kierkegaard's work would seem to soften the dichotomy between art and faith.

Mooney suggests that Kierkegaard's admiration of Socrates is as much for his piety as his rational honesty and philosophical method. Kierkegaard, the religious philosopher, shares important traits with Socrates, who admits his inability to comprehend in order to allow room for wonder. Socrates expresses wonder at the beauty of love in the *Symposium*, and commends the value of religious poetry to give expression to such wonder at life's mystery.<sup>176</sup> Mooney cites Kierkegaard's own evaluation of the *Symposium* as an 'incredibly wonderful presentation of the power of love to ennoble man'.<sup>177</sup> Mooney points out that Socrates, like Kierkegaard, puts care of the souls of those around him ahead of the pursuit of wealth or ambition. Socrates expresses his piety in deferring to his *daimon*, as a reminder to him of his limited insight, of the need for thinking to give way to praising in religious verse. This theme finds expression in the *Phaedo*. Socrates, in prison and awaiting death, has been honouring the gods in verse as his thoughts turn to meditation on a future life.<sup>178</sup> Mooney therefore discerns a similar need both for Socrates and Kierkegaard, in their admittedly very different ways, to move away from direct questioning at certain points, in favour of an aesthetic form of communication as appropriate to the highest concerns and deepest mysteries of life. Both thinkers, one might say, would hold, against Aristotle, that a certain self-critical humility is proper to the philosopher, such that philosophy both begins, and ends, in wonder, and above all in the wonder of love.

Such a softening of the distinction between art and faith, through due attention to the nuanced and multivalent nature of Kierkegaard's writings, would therefore seem also to indicate a softening, if not of the distinction, then at least of any rigidly enforced segregation of pagan *eros* – Kierkegaard's sensuous immediacy or vital desire – from Christian *agape*. Eros, we must remember, is 'Don Giovanni': unbridled desire; and yet this is the same desire which, within loving relationships, can educate, calm and indeed exalt, according to Diotima's and Socrates' account in the *Symposium*, an account which Kierkegaard prizes as manifesting the ennobling power of *eros*, according to Mooney. George Pattison suggests that poetry, for Kierkegaard, can indeed have a religious register,<sup>179</sup> leading Mooney to contemplate that Socratic love 'can work

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<sup>176</sup> Mooney, *Søren Kierkegaard*, p. 43.

<sup>177</sup> Mooney, *Søren Kierkegaard*, p. 44.

<sup>178</sup> Mooney, *Søren Kierkegaard*, p. 43.

<sup>179</sup> George Pattison, 'Representing Love: from Poetry to Martyrdom or Language and Transcendence in Kierkegaard's "Works of Love"', *Kierkegaardiana*, 22, (2002), p. 153.



as a metaphor, intimating a Christian religious love'.<sup>180</sup> Such a concept of the illuminating power of human love to reveal divine love will be addressed in my final chapter.

### **(3) Proposal, Summary and Prospect**

In view of the specifically theological tensions which I have noted in the Kierkegaardian account of art in relation to faith, I am still led to propose that Kierkegaard's apparent denial of any place to purely external or artistic aesthetics in the life of faith remains highly problematic. Mooney's hints indeed register Kierkegaard's need for the aesthetic in order to communicate his paradoxical message, but do not of themselves solve the problem that I have outlined. The ground for this problem, this perceived Kierkegaardian impasse between the inward aesthetic of ethics and faith and the external aesthetics of art and nature would be the apparent absence, according to the account given in 'The Musical Erotic', of any possibility of ethical orientation as at least implicit, or intimated, in the lower aesthetic sphere.

Against this characterisation of a necessary ethical *lacuna* in the aesthetic sphere, however, I shall be suggesting in later chapters that an inner, ethical orientation is, indeed, essential to any genuine artistic discernment, whether in the creation or appreciation of works of art. I shall be further suggesting that a romantic discernment of the un-grasp-ability of divine truth – a position against which Kierkegaard sets his face – can lead to attitudes and aesthetic practices – such as those of Samuel Taylor Coleridge – very different from Schlegel's ironising ethical relativism. The term 'romantic' has been used in a plethora of highly divergent and sometimes contradictory ways, as I suggested at the beginning of chapter one; it certainly cannot be limited to the work of Schlegel's Jena Circle at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>181</sup>

To sum up the findings of this chapter while pointing ahead, I suggest that Kierkegaard's 'musically indirect' works, as understood in the foregoing, play a crucial role in his *oeuvre* considered as a whole. These meticulously-wrought compositions occupy a central position, whilst often embodying a high degree of lyrical suggestiveness and literary skill, as deployed in an authorship which Kierkegaard himself owned to be a personal, divine vocation. This vocation – to refresh and make available to his contemporaries a gospel-message that had been lost through a long history of over-familiarity and blatant hypocrisy – could only be fulfilled by Kierkegaard's invoking to the full his personal powers of artistic insight and creativity.

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<sup>180</sup> Mooney, *Søren Kierkegaard*, p. 45.

<sup>181</sup> See Walzel, *German Romanticism*, passim.

I suggest, therefore, that Kierkegaard's finding no place for the 'outward' aesthetics of art and 'the language of nature'<sup>182</sup> within the life of faith is actually contradicted by the nature of his own theologically and artistically powerful work, as a reflective strategy of communication of the Christian gospel. Kierkegaard's focus on existential or 'inward' aesthetics, whether as the appreciation of the beauty of faithful love or in the appropriation of faith, needs balancing by an approach which, while sharing Kierkegaard's concern for truthfulness to ethico-religious reality, can also do justice to the ethical and theological value of art as mediating intimations of transcendence. Such is typically the aim of certain romantic styles of creative expression, and so it is to romantic art, so considered, that my attention will be directed in later discussions, in an attempt to show the underlying relatedness of romantic and existential approaches to the issue of possible human access to divine transcendence.

Kierkegaard's own highly effective aesthetic practice of the indirect communication of faith as an authentic subjective possibility itself suggests that a properly theological account of such practice should be sought; an account for which Kierkegaard's own theological position, in his anti-Hegelian delineation of conceptually un-mediabile existential spheres, does not apparently find room.

While Kierkegaard has presented good reason to exclude a process of determinate conceptual mediation from his account of the nature of true faith, I find that he still needs an indeterminate or aesthetic mediation of concepts in order truly to communicate the gospel; a gospel which is itself the preaching of Christ's salvific entry into death through the destructive depths of human sinfulness, since, as Gregory of Nazianzus argues, what is un-assumed by Christ is unredeemed. So in order to do justice to such a gospel, and to account, theologically, for Kierkegaard's ability to preach it in aesthetically reflective terms, an account must be found that is capable of reconciling the inward aesthetics of faith with a romantic intimation of genuinely ethico-religious transcendence, through art, and the aesthetic appreciation of a nature at least potentially open to redemption in Christ.

In seeking a common ground of romantic and existential approaches to transcendence, I am drawn first, in the following chapter, to Kantian epistemology considered, following Paton, as primarily a 'metaphysic of experience'. I will give reason in chapter three for regarding Kant as the source of insights across a wide and divergent field of post-Kantian thought, ranging from absolute idealism, through romanticism, to Kierkegaard's existential reaction to both the former. Thus in what follows next I shall attempt to show that both romantic and existential styles of

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<sup>182</sup> See *Either/Or* part 1, pp. 69-70.

thought are moulded by, or in reaction to, Kantian thinking, especially in relation to the themes of selfhood, time and the productive or transcendental imagination.

My aim, in thus beginning with Kant, therefore, is to uncover the ground on which a possible reconciliation between Kierkegaard's literary practice and the theological aims to which this practice of indirect or aesthetic communication is devoted. This is the quest which governs my thinking throughout the following chapters. By the end of this thesis, I aim to have demonstrated that genuine ethical faith and aesthetic discernment are intimately related, and that the properly receptive disposition in relation to divine transcendence is ethico-aesthetic; that a faithful response to the paradox of revelation may be achieved through what can be called the aesthetic will.

### III

## Kant: time, imagination and the self

### Introduction

I have suggested in chapter two that Kierkegaard's finding no place for the 'outward' aesthetics of art and nature within the life of faith is actually contradicted by his own theologically and artistically powerful work, as a reflective strategy of communication of the Christian message. Thus I have claimed that Kierkegaard's focus on existential or 'inward' aesthetics needs balancing by an approach which, while sharing Kierkegaard's concern for personal integrity in a truthful response to paradoxical religious reality, can also do justice to the theological value of outward aesthetic expression and experience as intimative of transcendence.

I have shown, in chapter one, that such an aesthetic encounter with transcendence is typically the aim of certain romantic styles of creative expression, and so it is to a specific, Coleridgean form of romanticism, so considered, that my attention will be directed in chapter seven, in an attempt to show the underlying relatedness of a Coleridgean to a Kierkegaardian approach to the issue of possible human access to divine transcendence. My aim, in focusing this chapter on Kantian epistemology, especially with reference to Kant's accounts of the self, imagination and time, is to uncover the ground on which such a possible relatedness of approach and concern might be discovered, thus reconciling Kierkegaardian faith with a particular Coleridgean concept of romantic thought. Such a common ground can be found in Kantian epistemology. Therefore, this chapter examines the distinctive and fundamental connection between temporality, imagination and selfhood, as brought to light by Kant, and as it continues to be the focus of thinkers after him, in the related traditions of romanticism, absolute idealism, and existentialism. Whether in reacting against Kant, or in seeking to continue along the same path, I will show in later chapters that a pattern of influence can be traced through well known voices representing these three modes of thought.

In terms of preparing the ground for chapters to come, therefore, this chapter, through its focus on Kant, aims to perform an initial survey of the 'lie of the land', or of the relevant conceptual 'territory' in terms of which other thinkers will be addressed, and over which later moves will be made as the argument of my thesis develops. This chapter is thus primarily concerned with issues of conceptual orientation and thematic location, as regards a Kantian understanding of time, selfhood and productive imagination.

I will progress to the theme of time, as reconceived by Henri Bergson in terms of his concept of ‘duration’, in the next chapter, as embodying a mode of thought reacting against a Kantian and idealist deterministic approach to time. Bergson’s powerful account of duration will provide a criterion for later differentiations between romantic, ‘intuitive’ approaches to transcendence – such as are reconcilable with Kierkegaardian faith – and the objective, deterministic approach to temporal process of post-Kantian idealism, (which Kierkegaard attacks through the work of Hegel, as seen in chapter one). The present chapter will provide me with the materials, through attention to Kant’s account of time, with which to set Bergson’s ideas in critical interaction.

### **(1) Constructing a perspective: Kant’s task in the *Critique of Pure Reason***

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant equates the limits of possible, conceptually determined knowledge with those of possible inner and outer experience.<sup>183</sup> In thus situating knowledge temporally (inner sense) and spatially (outer sense), Kant rules out the possibility of any perspective-less knowledge of reality, any metaphysical thesis that claims to define timeless principles of reality in objective terms. For Kant, empirical knowledge gives us genuine cognitive access to the world, but the world thus known can only amount to a particular perspective on an intrinsically unknowable source of sensible appearances. What is known through the senses is also to some extent an unconscious or pre-conscious construction out of the cognitive and intuitive forms within which sensible data must be received, organised and judged.

Kant calls such formal, epistemic construction-work transcendental.<sup>184</sup> In describing our empirical awareness as an epistemological construct, (so far as its cognitive form as distinct from its sensible matter or content is concerned), Kant is suggesting that human beings view reality through a perspective, or framework, which is always already a product of intuitive spatio-temporal forms and ‘pure’ or empirically un-derived, conceptual categories, which serve – transcendently – to structure experience, rendering it possible.

The strikingly new feature of Kant’s critical epistemology is that he is the first philosopher to view reality as conformed – transcendently – to our mode of adaptation for receiving it, of ‘tuning in’ to the world around us. Kant likens his transcendental epistemological thesis to the astronomical hypothesis of Copernicus: as the sun does not revolve around the earth, so our knowledge of reality is not conformed to reality, rather, reality is conformed to our knowledge of it:

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<sup>183</sup> The distinction ‘inner’ and ‘outer’, here, as indicated in the introduction to chapter one, corresponds to Kierkegaard’s distinction between outward and inward orientations, as met with in the case of imaginative activity, in chapters one and two.

<sup>184</sup> Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp.399-400.

I immediately see an easier way out of the difficulty, since experience itself is a kind of cognition requiring the understanding, whose rule I have to presuppose in myself before any object is given to me, hence *a priori*, to which all objects of experience must therefore necessarily conform, and with which they must agree.<sup>185</sup>

We view the world through tinted cognitive spectacles; Kant investigates the nature of this ‘tinting’, through a process of transcendental argumentation. A transcendental argument is a process of inference disclosing the *a priori* pre-conditions owing to which experience as we know it can be possible at all.<sup>186</sup>

At the beginning of the introduction to the second edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant is already drawing our attention to the temporal origin and nature of our experience: ‘as far as time is concerned then, no cognition in us precedes experience, and with experience every cognition begins’.<sup>187</sup> Kant’s project moves from this acknowledgement of the temporal situatedness of empirical awareness to justify the universal application of certain conceptual categories, and formal elements of intuition or sensibility, as not only necessary for the possibility of subjective experience, but also as necessary conditions for that same, phenomenal experience being of an objective world, distinct from or opposed to ourselves. It is to the central role of time, considered as a formal experiential *a priori* – the necessary, sequential form of any possible sensible intuition – that I now turn.

## **(2) Kant: Time as the Fundamental Condition of Experience**

Kant’s transcendental epistemological constructivism involves not only pure conceptual components, as discussed in the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* known as the ‘Transcendental Analytic’, but also it extends to the forms of space and time themselves, described as pure forms of intuition, as analysed in abstraction from any empirical content, or ‘matter’ of sensation.

The discussion of space and time takes place in the section of Kant’s first *Critique* entitled ‘The Transcendental Aesthetic’.<sup>188</sup> After showing Kant’s position to be that time and space are formal conditions of the possibility of sensible intuition, I will analyse his grounds for such a claim, leading me to conclude that time is regarded as the more fundamental condition of possible experience. This will lead me on to a discussion of the relation between time and imagination in conditioning the possibility of experience, in part three. The concept of a

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<sup>185</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Bxvi-xvii.

<sup>186</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A12.

<sup>187</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B1.

<sup>188</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A19-B73.

transcendental imagination as conditioning possible experience will loom large in later chapters of this thesis, as my argument progresses.

Kant argues that it is not gathered either through sensibility or conceptual thought that our cognitive representations are spatially extended and conformed to a necessary order of temporal succession. This means that time is not an empirical concept, that is, it is not an *a posteriori* concept derived from experience, even though it is through experience – or through analysis of its possibility – that we can come to this recognition. To the contrary, Kant shows that we could not represent co-existence or succession if time were not an *a priori* precondition of our awareness of things.<sup>189</sup> Whilst our representations are indubitably spatio-temporal in that notions of contemporaneity and succession are implied within them, if their sensible content does not indicate this directly, then space and time can only be the *a priori*, formal conditions of those representations. Time and space are ‘necessary representations’, formal principles of combination underlying all our sensible intuitions, which are therefore only possible as temporally ordered, or transcendently conformed, *a priori*, to the temporal form of our intuition.<sup>190</sup> Space and time therefore have no status independently of experience, but are experiential conditions.

Space is described as the form of outer sense by Kant, meaning that it is transcendently prior to the possible representation of any object of outer, sensible awareness, in that space is an immediate (i.e., not conceptually mediated) and *a priori* ‘given’. On the other hand, time cannot be outwardly intuited. This is not to say that spatial objects are not known to co-exist at one time, or to precede and follow on from one another in ordered sequence, but that our awareness of such temporal patterning is never directly presented to us from without.<sup>191</sup> This is because time, as the form of inner sense, of intuition of ourselves and our inner state (including all our awareness of objects in outer sense), cannot itself be a determination of outer appearances (and thus is not given to outer sense). Time has nothing to do with position or shape, therefore, but concerns the necessarily ordered relation of such shapes and positions as they inhere in consciousness.<sup>192</sup>

Equally, while space is indeed an *a priori* form of sense, spatial appearances, as containing matter of sensation or empirical content, are always mediated through time as the form of inner sense, since empirical representations have no existence as representations independent of the

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<sup>189</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B46.

<sup>190</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A31. As will be discussed below, time takes epistemological priority over space: as the formal, intuitive condition of inner sense, time is also the condition of any spatial representation of outer sense, since any possible knowledge of the external world can only come to pass within the temporal flow of experience.

<sup>191</sup> Gardner, Sebastian, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), p. 74.

<sup>192</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A33.

subjective conditions of their construction.<sup>193</sup> All human experience occurs within inner sense, of which time is the form, and this overarching temporal conditioning thus points to the transcendental priority of temporal, inner sense over outer sense in the constitution of empirical subjectivity. Time is, for Kant the primordial element of human consciousness.<sup>194</sup> External awareness of the spatial manifold is made possible by our awareness of the temporal flow of our own mental states. Since empirical experience is actual only in virtue of the fact that sensible data have come to be formally constructed within our own minds, our awareness that outer representations are temporal is possible because they exist *as* representations solely within the temporal form of inner sense.

According to Kant, therefore, time is more fundamental to human subjectivity than space, since any external representations can exist only within or on the basis of inner sense, or time, as their condition of possibility. Being human is, fundamentally, being temporal; our awareness never stands still, and is possible as self-conscious awareness only because of this temporal element, as we shall see later. Unlike, so far as we know, any other creature, we can transcend any given present moment in thought. Thought itself is interpreted by Kant as the relation of representations in judgements (concepts being judgemental forms or functions of unity in judgements), which implies that thinking is only ultimately a possibility for us since we can make connections.<sup>195</sup> As we shall see, the fundamental ground of such an ability to connect through comparison and contrast is the ability to relate a ‘then’ to a ‘now’, and a ‘then’ and a ‘now’ to what might become.

I suggest, on this basis, and recalling the Kierkegaardian position discovered in chapter one, that within the Kantian and post-Kantian framework human subjectivity is ultimately a consciousness of one’s own becoming. Animals, we must presume, are tied to the immediacy of the moment, and are never able to transcend that momentary consciousness through a mediated representation of temporal unity that allows the contents of consciousness to be thought, and thus connected together in an objective temporal order.

It is to the problem of just how such cognitive distance is established that I turn in the next section, which will centre upon issues that can be summed up as follows. Kant needs to show how a categorically structured temporal order of succession, as an objective order of necessary causal relations, can come to be thought, when categories of thought such as cause and substance are never sensibly given in experience. To this end, he must show how pure *a priori* thoughts and sensible affections necessarily belong together in experience, even though they are

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<sup>193</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A34.

<sup>194</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A34.

<sup>195</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A68/B93 – A69/B94.



as diverse as activity from passivity. In other words, Kant aims to discover a condition, neither sensible nor conceptual, which can nevertheless mediate between sensible appearances in time and concepts of the pure understanding. The imagination, considered in transcendental terms, will be shown to provide just such an experiential condition by uniting the polar opposites of sensibility and thought.

### **(3) Kant, Imagination and Selfhood**

In his *Critique of Pure Reason*, (under the heading ‘On the Deduction of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding’,<sup>196</sup> although known more simply as the ‘transcendental deduction’), Kant looks for an explanation as to how pure concepts of the understanding can come to apply to a sensibility from which they are not derived, and with which it would seem that they could have no necessary connection, as, in their origin, they are merely forms of our thinking. In order to become categories, or forms of the unity of the manifold of sense as known in synthetic *a priori* judgement, pure concepts of the understanding need to be schematised by the imagination.

In what follows, I shall address the transcendental role of imagination, as an essential component of Kant’s transcendental deduction of the categories. This means that I will address the transcendental imagination’s role as a mediator between concepts of the pure understanding and sensibility. For the sake of clarity and relevance to the aims of my thesis, I will do my best to focus solely on the function of imagination at this point, and to do so, I will be selectively focusing my account on the ‘subjective’ aspect of Kant’s deduction. That is to say, I will be drawing on that part of Kant’s argumentation found largely in the earlier, ‘A’ version of the deduction, as given in the first edition of the *Critique*. This account is designed to show how pure thoughts, as forms of subjectivity, can become conditions of objective empirical knowledge.

We have already seen it suggested, in relation to Kierkegaard’s thought in chapter two, that imagination plays a key role in human receptivity to the paradox of revelation. My engagement with Kant’s account of the epistemological role of imagination aims to establish a basis of understanding upon which to advance later in this thesis. Later on, Kierkegaard’s thinking will serve as a criterion by which to assess different idealist and romantic post-Kantian models which address imagination – although in importantly different ways – as a transcendental medium of metaphysical insight. As transcendental, such accounts eschew what Kant would describe as an uncritically dogmatic metaphysical approach<sup>197</sup> (that is, an approach making

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<sup>27</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A77/B102 – A79/B14.

<sup>197</sup> See Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, pp. 162-3.

empirically transcendent generalisations with concepts that only have cognitive value in relation to sensibility). The relation of Kant's thought to that of Henri Bergson will also be foreshadowed below in connection with the issue of transcendental imaginative schematism. My account here will thus prepare the way for Bergson's critique of Kantian temporality through his own conception of time as 'duration', to be addressed in chapters four and five. All this, it should be remembered, is in furtherance of my stated thesis-goal of reconciling Kierkegaard's account of faith to his own practice of aesthetic intimation, or indirect communication.

Firstly then, as just indicated, I will outline the nature of the problem for which Kant offers his transcendental deduction as a proposed solution. This will then enable a closer focus on the role of imagination within Kant's argument.

### **(3.1) Imagining Time**

If the conceptual categories of the pure understanding, that give experience its cognitive structure, are not to be merely empty forms of thought, they need a content, or real application to sensibility.<sup>198</sup> But such a pre-experiential, or transcendently conditioning content could only be found in the pure forms of sensibility: time and space. I shall explain.

Since the cognitive categories are conditions for the very possibility of knowing sensible contents of knowledge, what is sensibly received – the matter of sense, sense data or *sensa* – cannot itself be a condition for the applicability of such transcendental concepts. But the sense data known in empirical or phenomenal knowledge, and which are thus always already categorically structured, must also have been spatio-temporally conformed, or processed by the pure spatio-temporal forms of intuition. Thus it is to these pure, intuitive forms of time and space that the transcendental categories must look for their purely *a priori* applicability.

It is Kant's claim that the categories of the pure understanding make objective, empirical knowledge possible *a priori*, which entails that their content cannot be derived from what is given passively (or *a posteriori*) to the senses. If categorical concepts derived their content from sense, they would not be transcendental. They would only be *a posteriori* or empirical concepts, with only contingent significance, and thus would lack the *a priori* necessity which such concepts must possess in order to act as foundational, or certain principles of knowledge; principles on which all other genuinely ampliative or synthetic knowledge can be shown to depend necessarily.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> H. J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience* 2 vols. (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936), vol. 1, p. 262.

<sup>199</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B40.

How then do truly synthetic yet pure, or *a priori* concepts come by their content? In solving this problem, Kant is led to accord an epistemologically constructive role to the imagination, as providing content, by construing sense data, for the necessary conceptual connections which enable an objective awareness of time, in terms of categories of cause and substance. Kant defines imagination as a faculty making present to consciousness that which is absent to the senses.<sup>200</sup> It is the nature of experience to have one, unified order of succession, to occur in a uni-directional and predictable sequence, and transcendental concepts, through imaginative mediation, provide such a temporal framework.

I shall now attempt to account for this synthesis or temporal ordering of sensibility that renders perception possible, thereby enabling a content for empirical thought. (But it should be remembered that in focusing solely on this sensible synthesis I am abstracting from a wider context in which the transcendental unity of apperception – as a condition of possible self-consciousness – is found to be the ultimate condition of the objectivity of successive perceptions, as the highest principle of the understanding. This condition of possible self-consciousness will be addressed below in section five). In order to exist as the content of one, unified consciousness, and thus to be known as objects of my experience, the successive synthesis of appearances must be carried out according to necessary categorical forms so that one, objective temporal order may be possible, an objectively unified manifold for consciousness to know.

In the course of ongoing experience, the capacity for a pure, temporal construal of sense data, such as can mediate between sensibility and conceptuality, between empirical conceptual activity and sensible passivity, belongs to the reproductive imagination. The reproductive imagination construes the temporality of sensibility by reproducing or retaining what is no longer present to sense and anticipating what might not yet be present to sense. Therefore Kant defines the imagination as ‘the faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition’.<sup>201</sup> In its role of enabling the application of pure concepts of the understanding, and thus conditioning the possibility of experience *a priori*, this formative yet non-conceptual capacity is known as the transcendental or productive imagination.

It is therefore the transcendental imagination which accounts, as a process of combination, for the apprehension of the temporal mode into which pure forms of the understanding can be adapted, thereby rendering such forms intrinsically necessary to possible knowledge of the

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<sup>200</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B151.

<sup>201</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B151.

content of sense.<sup>202</sup> Imaginatively mediated adaptation to temporal intuition enables pure forms of thought to act as universally valid, categorical criteria of the objectivity of experience. Pure categories of experience such as causality cannot be derived from the content of sense, but through the medium of imagination, pure conceptual and pure intuitive forms can coalesce in the objective interpretation of a given, sensible manifold.

For Kant, the role of imagination, in our appropriation of intuition as temporal, is to present a temporal connectedness of content for thought to think. Reminiscent of what we have learned from Kierkegaard's account of the imagination, and surely influencing it, Kantian imagination is neither purely active (as regulated by the pure understanding), nor purely passive (as moulding the data of sense). This paradoxical status of imagination should be noted here, since the imagination's ambiguous 'active-passivity' will be very important for later discussions, as we have already seen it to be in connection with Kierkegaard's thought.

Kant writes in the 'A' version of his transcendental deduction of the categories that any 'affinity' or combinability of the manifold of sense data into conscious experience is, at bottom, a result of the 'transcendental function of the imagination' in *a priori* synthesis.<sup>203</sup> I shall explain.

For Kant, as also for much post-Kantian thought (as, for example, for Kierkegaard, as we have seen, and in diverse ways for Schelling and Coleridge, as we shall see) the imagination is by nature a medium between the passive receptivity of sense and conceptual activity. For Kant himself, this means that imagination allows experientially constitutive conceptual structure to be brought into synthesis with sensibility, as a condition of possible conscious experience. Through the transcendently productive imagination's discernment of patterns, or temporal schemes (Kant's 'schemata') in what is sensibly received, concepts of the pure understanding are temporally 'schematised', or related to appearances *as* temporally organised.<sup>204</sup> In such a way, the merely logical, analytical conceptual forms of ground and consequent, (for example), can manifest themselves as a synthetic *a priori* categorical condition, as conditioning the temporal structure of experience in terms of cause and effect. As said already, forms of intuition are nothing in themselves; it is imagination's appreciation of the temporal succession of appearances – a formal intuition – which schematises purely analytic concepts, giving them content such that they may function as categories organising genuine empirical knowledge.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A102.

<sup>203</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A123.

<sup>204</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A117-A118.

<sup>205</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A99-A102.

This conception of the imagination's schematising role, its enabling any cognition of the manifold as temporal, is similar to Wittgenstein's notion of 'aspect-seeing' (which, again, we have met in connection with Kierkegaardian imagination in chapter two). Transcendental or productive imagination, by allowing the world to be seen as temporal, is closely bound up with Kant's account of the transcendental unity of apperception, as the condition *sine qua non* of experience, as we shall see in more detail below.

So we have found that imagination is understood by Kant as a crucial factor in time consciousness, which is itself the core of human awareness. The two stems of conceptuality and sensibility are said by Kant to spring from 'a common but to us unknown root'.<sup>206</sup> Schelling, Coleridge and Heidegger<sup>207</sup> understand the transcendental, or 'primary'<sup>208</sup> imagination to be itself this root. Kant, as the pioneer of such insights, believes that intuitions without concepts are blind, but equally that conceptual synthesis depends entirely on the schematising, or mediating role of the productive imagination in relating transcendental (and also empirical) concepts to sense data, an issue which I will now address in more detail, as analyses of the mediating role of imagination in Kant and his successors, in chapters ahead, will be vital to the overall argument of my thesis.

### (3.2) What is Schematism?

J. Michael Young suggests that one should understand Kant's thinking on the issue of imagination, both in its empirical, or reproductive and its transcendental aspects, in terms of an ability to construe sensible affects in temporal terms, rather than as a capacity for forming mental images.<sup>209</sup> Young insists that this focus on imaginative construal distinguishes Kant in this respect from empiricists such as Hume.<sup>210</sup> To regard the imagination as a faculty for construing reality temporally, and thus as a capacity to see more than is given sensibly in any instant, is to break with an empirical tradition that regards imaginative images as faded relics of a purely sensible or passive perception on which they depend. Imaginative schematism is imagination's ability to construe the manifold of sense, to discern patterns in appearances. But the imagination's 'reading' of sensibility is as much a pre-conceptual act, as it is a response to what is sensibly given. The theme of this intermediary condition of imagination, as situated between activity and passivity, should be noted in anticipation of developments in later chapters.

<sup>206</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A15/B29.

<sup>207</sup> See, for example, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Peter Heath (tr.) (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), p. 176; Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* vol. 1, p. 202; Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Richard Taft (tr.) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), p. 61.

<sup>208</sup> vol. 1, p. 202.

<sup>209</sup> J. Michael Young, 'Kant's View of Imagination', *Kant-Studien* 79, (1988), pp. 140-164.

<sup>210</sup> See, for example, David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Ernest C. Mossner (ed.) (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 56-57.

In interpreting Kant, Henry Allison agrees with Young that an imaginative schema is not an image. Images could be seen as samples of types, or examples.<sup>211</sup> Examples share with images the property of particularity. They are determined, and thus limited. A concept, however, has universal significance. A concept is a rule for judgement that confers universality, and thus necessity on a judgement; in other words, it is by means of concepts that a judgement's claim for public recognition is warranted, as publically sharable. An objective judgement can expect the agreement of anyone else judging of the same situation. Examples, as fixed in reference, are useful, therefore, but of limited value to empirical judgement,<sup>212</sup> since the applicability of a specific example to different situations will depend upon an indeterminable number of contingent circumstances, that no determined example could possibly cover, in principle. This is why Kant insists that the capacity to judge well is an inherent ability, which is lacking to someone who never outgrows the need for examples, and therefore cannot perceive their insufficiency as criteria for correct judgement.<sup>213</sup>

To judge well, therefore, one needs the ability to discern 'the universal in the particular',<sup>214</sup> to distinguish imaginatively in a given context between the general, and yet still individuated and limited pattern, or 'schema', as embodied in and illustrated by the particular example – the not yet determined, not yet conceptual shape which is presented in the content before one. Only through the imagination's distinguishing the schematic shape – the temporal generality involved in the particularity of an appearance – can one judge whether this temporal, or intuitively formal pattern is applicable in light of contingent circumstances attending the given context of judgement.

This is why Allison refers to schemata, both empirical and transcendental, as 'recognition' capacities:<sup>215</sup> a schema is a mode of construal of the sensible manifold, and guides the correct application of universal concepts to perception. As Young points out,<sup>216</sup> as the capacity for 'representing an object even without its presence in intuition',<sup>217</sup> imagination necessarily perceives more than is present in sensation, it construes that sensation into a recognisable temporal 'shape' for the application of a concept, or as Kant has it, for 'recognition' in a concept.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>211</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 208.

<sup>212</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 208.

<sup>213</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A134-5/B174.

<sup>214</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 208.

<sup>215</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 209.

<sup>216</sup> Young, 'Kant's View of Imagination', p. 142.

<sup>217</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B151.

<sup>218</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A103.

The role of imagination in transcendental logic is distinct from its role in relating to the general logic that governs empirical concepts in ordinary knowledge, however, in that there are specific transcendental schemata that are necessary to the application of the categories. This difference is rooted in the apriority of transcendental logic. Unlike general logic, which only analyses what can already be known, transcendental logic, (as categorical), enables knowledge itself, or is synthetic, in that it conditions possible experience.

I will now illustrate how Kant envisages transcendental schematism in action with reference to Young's article, 'Kant's View of Imagination'.<sup>219</sup> The nature of Kantian schematising activity must be understood, in order to grasp, in the next chapter, Bergson's criticism of Kant from the point of view of a supposedly more fundamental concept of temporal process. In chapter four I shall show the difference between a Kantian, (or, as Bergson terms it, 'spatialised') concept of time and the actual process that is time's integral movement. Bergson's account will reveal time as the bearer of a genuinely unpredictable cognitive novelty that cannot be accounted for in Kantian terms. This distinction between Bergsonian and Kantian concepts of time will be shown to affect the possible compatibility of certain styles of romantic aesthetics with a Kierkegaardian or paradoxical concept of revelation, in chapters to come. To facilitate this line of argument, therefore, I now turn to Young's account of Kantian epistemological schematism.

### **(3.3) Kant's numerical schematism and the quantification of the intrinsic quality of process**

Young's analysis of a key instance of transcendental schematism – the schema for the concept of quantity – serves to illuminate a problem with Kantian temporality that I shall show to be addressed by Bergson. According to Kant's account, the distinction between the pure concept of quantity and its schema, number, is bound up with the question of how a given quantity of sense-data can be represented in consciousness.<sup>220</sup> Only by referring to sense can a representation of any finite portion or amount of experiential content be achieved. The knowledge of sensibly given quantities depends ultimately upon our ability to identify collections, but we are presented only with particulars through sensible affection. In order to justify a reference or application for pure concepts, such as quantity, we have to be able to group particulars together. As no such combination is given sensibly, this grouping is always the work of the imagination, guided by the understanding.<sup>221</sup> But what is involved in the construal of a given affective state as a collection? It implies the gathering up of what is before

<sup>219</sup> My analysis in the following paragraphs is based on Young, 'Kant's View of Imagination', pp. 157-63.

<sup>220</sup> Young, 'Kant's View of Imagination', p. 160.

<sup>221</sup> The ambiguous nature of Kantian imagination as neither guide nor guided (active or passive) purely, as met already in relation to Kierkegaard, will play a key part in chapter five.

us into perceptive consciousness. What is before us is contained in the form of time. Therefore this gathering up into consciousness will be serial.

But if there are only particulars in the pure manifold of sense, how can one particular be connected to another? Only by retaining the previous sensible contents in memory can they be linked together with their successors as members of a series. Membership implies homogeneity, a likeness or affinity between particulars. Memory can only retain past ‘moments’ (or ‘points’ as Kant calls them)<sup>222</sup> as members of a series if these can be seen to belong together on the basis of such homogeneity. Therefore to say that we remember the past and anticipate the future leaves out a step.

In order to determine a quantity, we must be able, imaginatively, to construe<sup>223</sup> what is to be retained in memory as belonging together. We have to construe a continuity of homogeneous moments according to a recognisable pattern, and to continue the serial interpretation we must be able to add the homogeneous to the homogeneous; that is, we must have a temporal plan of activity. Such a temporal plan is a method. To construe a series, we submit what is presented sensibly to a methodical interpretation, which involves ‘running through a collection of things, one after another, determining thereby that they conform to a certain rule’.<sup>224</sup>

I will analyse this last assertion. The imaginative ‘running through’ of the manifold is a matter of serial or temporal construal. It is made possible because the imagination works methodically, recognising a collection as belonging together, on the basis of a homogeneous mode of construal of the successive items to be retained. Such a method involves the possibility of anticipating how to construe the next datum in line in terms of its similarity to its predecessors. Methodical activity such as this is rule-determined, and can only exist as such. A haphazard succession is not methodical. Something must therefore guide, normatively, an imaginative procedure of running through the manifold, to take it up into consciousness. The pure concept of quantity is, in our example, such a guiding rule, and in belonging to the understanding, this concept of quantity derives from what Kant describes as ‘a faculty of rules’.<sup>225</sup> This necessary principle of methodical, temporal ordering enables homogeneity in the manifold to be recognised through a process of imaginative synthesis or union of the contents of consciousness for the understanding; which is to say that the imagination, guided in this case by the pure

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<sup>222</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A140.

<sup>223</sup> I reserve the term ‘interpret’ for empirical or aesthetic, as opposed to transcendental, conceptual activity.

<sup>224</sup> Young, ‘Kant’s View of Imagination’, p. 160.

<sup>225</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A126.



concept of quantity, construes the manifold as a necessarily or objectively ordered field of consciousness for the understanding, and thus for a thinking subject.<sup>226</sup>

We are looking, therefore, for a necessarily ordered and successive process of quantifying, which can retain previous marks by construing them as if along a continuous line by means of a method which, in principle, is an awareness of how to extend this line *ad infinitum*; we are looking for a methodical procedure that is always able to anticipate what will come next by virtue of an implicit standard of homogeneity. This rule governed, interpretative method is what we mean by counting. A method of determining the manifold in time transcendently is a transcendental schema, and the schematised category of the pure concept of quantity, is number. The concept of ‘number in general’ (e.g. the intelligibility of the concepts ‘nine’ or ‘ten’, say, in abstraction from groups of objects corresponding to those number-concepts) is thus not derived from sense. Sensible contents are always particulars, and a number is a representation in consciousness of a group. Numbers cannot be derived from the pure understanding however, because they can only be justified with reference to sense. But sense has a formal as well as a material aspect, as we have found. A number is therefore a concept depending for its objectivity on time as the form of inner sense. A formal intuition of time is thus a method for determining what is intuited in time in accordance with a pure concept, or rule, of the understanding, such as quantity. The concept of number in general is thus the representation of a transcendental schema of that pure concept of quantity, as magnitude.

Time can never be directly intuited, as Kant makes clear in the transcendental aesthetic, and in the first analogy of experience.<sup>227</sup> The representation of the permanent, of substance in outer sense, is necessary for awareness of all alteration as contained in one time, and just as is the case with relation to the specific instance of counting, we can only represent time itself by imaginatively constructing a line in the spatial form of outer sense, geometrically. This line must in principle be continuable *ad infinitum*, as just pointed out. This means that since its homogeneity is rule-determined, we always know how to keep the line going; such a linear representation of time is therefore spatially mediated.

Thus any awareness of time, for Kant, is fundamentally a matter of addition of homogeneous marks according to a method; and we have seen above that the principle of such a method is a pure concept of the understanding, that of quantity. Kant offers us therefore a spatialised and quantified conception of time.

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<sup>226</sup> Young, ‘Kant’s View of Imagination’, p. 160.

<sup>227</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B50; A182/B224 – A189/B232.

But in knowing, necessarily, that the time-line is infinitely extendable, as Henri Bergson would object (as we will see in the next chapter),<sup>228</sup> we always know, in principle, exactly how that time-line can be determined in advance. Time is thus, on the Kantian account before us, necessarily and formally pre-determined, and there is no room for genuine novelty, for any genuine creativity within the spatialised temporal order which Kant presents to us as the only possible field in which we can function cognitively. This is of direct relevance to the possibility of genuinely paradoxical, or Kierkegaardian revelation, as will emerge in later chapters. Bergson would in fact agree with Kant that conceptual knowledge is blind to novelty, to freedom. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, he also offers a radically different conception of time, a participative awareness that cannot be reduced to objective conceptual determination. Bergson, we shall see, suggests that Kant's spatially intuited time-line is really nothing of the sort. All there is for Kant, according to Bergson, is the series of homogeneous marks or points in space. Kant is found to be blind to the actual flow of genuine temporal awareness.

For as Bergson will point out, Kant's objective connecting of spatial points or markers takes time, a movement for which Kant offers no account (and can offer none in objective conceptual terms). Such time-taking, as the process of our counting, signifies that we are aware that we undergo an actual transition in the progress from homogeneous point A to homogeneous point B, *et cetera*. Bergson will therefore claim that Kant is unable to account for such immediately felt transition, as his concept of time abstracts from this feeling of lived duration and is consequently blind to its movement. As William James also realised,<sup>229</sup> such a Kantian or spatialised understanding of time is an essentially utilitarian or instrumental notion, as abstracted from concrete becoming, or duration, purely for the purposes of action. Such understanding, however, is not the tool to deliver insight into concrete becoming, into actuality understood as an essential process of self-manifestation: a creative and organic, ontological dynamic.

#### **(4) Kant's concept of possible objective consciousness as rooted in the conditions of subjective awareness**

As bound up with the account of the transcendental imagination just addressed in section three, the thinking involved in Kant's account of possible self-consciousness greatly informs later developments in this thesis, and so needs to be addressed before moving on.

<sup>228</sup> See, for example, Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, Mabelle L. Andison (tr.) (New York: Citadel Press, 1992), pp. 17-19; Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, Arthur Mitchell (tr.) (London: Macmillan, 1920), pp. 379-382.

<sup>229</sup> See, for example, William James, *A Pluralistic Universe*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), pp. 247-258.

In drawing this distinction between thought and knowledge, Kant holds that by virtue of its own reflexivity, human consciousness can become aware of its own limitation from within. We can know that we ourselves construct a formal perspective on the world, without, however, returning to a pre-critical or transcendently realist position, (an impossible, perspective-less ‘view from nowhere’, exemplified in the traditional tenet that knowledge is the result of conformity of experience to an object outside experience). Human knowledge can infer the boundaries of its own possibility from within.<sup>230</sup> Empirical reality, as a moulding of sensible conditions through pure *a priori* categories and pure forms of inner and outer intuition, is no less real for the insight that its sensible contents are transcendently conformed to our own forms of awareness, so that it is at the same time transcendently ideal. As Gardner points out, the knowledge-claim that we are perspectively oriented towards reality makes no claims about the ultimate nature of reality, but only determines the limits of experience from within as a ‘knowledge of the shape of our perspective’.<sup>231</sup> In asserting a noumenal or unknowable condition for empirical reality, therefore, Kant is not taking up a perspectiveless, transcendently realist position.

In view of what has just been said, and anticipating discussions to come, I would suggest that, for Kant, the very possibility of a critique of pure reason, and thus of an insight into its necessary limitation, is dependent on the reflexivity of consciousness, as establishing the possibility of a discursive distance from immediate perception through the ‘transcendental unity of apperception’,<sup>232</sup> or the possibility of cognitive self-consciousness. The transcendental unity of apperception, discussed more fully in the next section, is represented in an act of thinking in which thinking becomes aware of the necessity of its own activity in focusing its objects,<sup>233</sup> as a unifying condition of the possibility of thinking and knowing. This representation, ‘I think’, as an awareness of the fundamental, unifying act in which thinking becomes possible at all, as a focusing of sensible content into a necessarily structured form, must in principle be capable of accompanying all my representations.<sup>234</sup> Possible self-consciousness in thinking<sup>235</sup> is thus a necessary condition of experience.<sup>236</sup> Equally, and in a necessary structure of polarity with the cognitive subject, cognitive self-awareness must depend for its possibility on the sensible manifold, since it is only through recognising its own activity in objectively unifying this manifold that thought becomes aware of its own identity in apperception. Thought is always thought of something. Through claiming a self-oriented unity of experience for its own, the transcendental unity of apperception establishes a reflective distance from that experience. To

<sup>230</sup> Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 304.

<sup>231</sup> Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 304.

<sup>232</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B127, A107.

<sup>233</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*, vol. 1, p. 511.

<sup>234</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B131.

<sup>235</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*, vol. 1, p. 511.

<sup>236</sup> See W. H. Bossart, ‘Kant's Transcendental Deduction’, *Kant-Studien*, 68: 4 (1977), pp. 394 – 401.

be able to form an awareness of the objects of one's own consciousness is to be able to stand back from sensible appearances by virtue of thinking them. As grounded in such a reflexive act, our capacity to think is a distancing from sensible appearances that enables a re-union, or self-conscious return upon those appearances in the synthesising activity of conceptual judgement. As implying such separation, the capacity to think exceeds the limitations of what may be positively known in such judgements. Thought's capacity to reflect upon itself means that it transcends merely perceptive immediacy in the act of pure apperception. However, for Kant, our liberating discursive distance from the 'blind' immediacy of animal awareness entails a limiting distance from reality in itself, in respect of the world-in-itself as much as of the self-in-itself, as these might exist outside of the formal and sensible construction of empirical experience.

#### **(4.1) Kant's notion of transcendental subjectivity**

I have referred above to the transcendental unity of apperception, (possible self-consciousness in thinking), as argued for in Kant's transcendental deduction of the categories. As central to a theory of the possibility of the 'subject-object' relation,<sup>237</sup> and thus of the possibility of the perspective of human experience, transcendental subjectivity is obviously at the nerve centre of the Kantian critical structure. Like the conceptuality of transcendental imagination addressed in section three, the thinking involved in Kant's account of possible self-consciousness greatly informs later developments in this thesis, and so needs to be addressed before moving on. In the course of this section, I will also be building on what has just been learned in section four by elaborating further on the relationship between Kant's thinking concerning possible apperception and varieties of later idealist, romantic and existential thought, thus deepening the contextualisation of discussions in the chapters ahead.

The unity of apperception is, broadly, the possibility that I can think of myself in relation to any possible object of knowledge.<sup>238</sup> As enabling a unitary experiential flow of temporal awareness, apperceptive unity is of specific significance to my thesis in that it entails the impossibility of a direct knowledge of the self in-itself, or as anything more than empirical appearance, an issue that will be taken up in both romantic and idealist post-Kantian thought. It is also relevant to Kierkegaard's position that subjectivity, as interposed between reality and ideality is never transparent to itself (a predicament, as seen, which Kierkegaard describes as 'inter-esse'). In a profound sense, for Kierkegaard, we do not know who we truly are, and can only begin the process of self-discovery in light of the saving judgement of paradoxical revelation.

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<sup>237</sup> Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 143-5.

<sup>238</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B140.

For Kierkegaard, as we found, our self-awareness is always subject to what could be described in the wake of Kant as a transcendental, conditioning structure. We are, necessarily, always in the process of becoming ourselves through time. Kierkegaard could be described as at the crossroads between romantic and modernist conceptions of selfhood, alongside Schopenhauer, whose relationship to the thought of Kierkegaard was touched upon in chapter two.<sup>239</sup> Both thinkers deny what is purported to be a transparency and wholeness of self, as asserted in the earlier romantic and idealist reactions to Kant, (although, in relation to certain forms of romanticism, I will present reasons to challenge this contention in a later chapter). It is Kant, however, who first denied such self-transparency long before either Kierkegaard or Schopenhauer. In what follows, I hope to lay the foundation for developments in later chapters which deal with such nineteenth century developments from Kant's position.

To help explain this concept of the transcendental unity of apperception, perhaps an example is in order. One can note the impossibility of any experience that was not transcendently unified as Kant describes, in Dickens's use of poetic licence in the words he gives to a character in his novel *Hard Times*, as she lies dying:

‘Are you in pain, dear mother?’

‘I think there is a pain somewhere in the room,’ said Mrs. Gradgrind, ‘but I couldn’t positively say that I have got it’.<sup>240</sup>

An awareness of a bodily feeling that both is and is not one's own, barring a paranormal ‘out of body’ experience, is hard to credit. This is what Kant means when he insists that the thought ‘I’ must be able to accompany any possible experience,<sup>241</sup> as an experience one is in fact having, as identifiable within a unified and ‘claimable’ conscious field. This transcendental unity of apperception (the term apperception meaning simply a thought of oneself as the unifying centre of the experiential perspective) is necessary to any possible empirical experience. Mrs. Gradgrind's fictional predicament describes an impossible empirical experience, as not unified for a possible apperception: not claimable as one's own in thought.

For Kant, the transcendental unity of apperception is the fundamental form of unification for all thought, thought itself being essentially a process that unifies content through forms of judgement. The transcendental unity of apperception is to thought, therefore, what the conditioning forms of time and space are to all possible intuition.<sup>242</sup> In a sense, as the focus of the necessary connection of all experience within a unitary consciousness that can be aware of

<sup>239</sup> See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 419-55.

<sup>240</sup> Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), p. 221.

<sup>241</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B131.

<sup>242</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A110.

its own experience, the transcendental unity of apperception just is what is meant by the faculty of thinking.<sup>243</sup> It is more than this however.

In order that there can be experience, or empirical knowledge, as distinct from mere thought, thought must be combined with intuition into a pattern of objectively connected unity for apperception. The manifold of intuition must be objectified in accordance with necessary categorical modes of unification, as derived from, and directing the content of possible knowledge towards transcendental apperception as the ultimate condition of experience.<sup>244</sup> We have seen how the imagination fulfils a connecting or mediating role between thought and sensibility, by establishing a transcendental synthesis of the manifold by means of a pure temporal intuition. Through the transcendental imaginative synthesis, as regulated by the categories, the manifold is submitted to a necessary ordering according to categorical forms of judgement. The ultimate source of such forms of judgement as necessary conditions of experience is the transcendental unity of apperception, because the focused unity of the manifold, its synthesis into objective forms of connection for a single consciousness, is the fundamental act of objective unification from which all categorical judgements, as forms of the necessary unity of the manifold, derive their possibility.<sup>245</sup> Such categorical judgements are themselves connected to the manifold of sense through its temporal synthesis by means of the imagination. Since the imagination unites the manifold in accordance with the necessary forms of unity represented in the categories, it is itself, as a synthesis, subservient to the transcendental unity of apperception.<sup>246</sup>

#### **(4.2) The unknowable source of selfhood**

I will now look more closely into the question of the nature and role of the transcendental unity of apperception, and its relation to empirical self-awareness, whose temporal conditions are established according to the unity of apperception through the transcendental synthesis of imagination. The necessity of reflexivity, or self-consciousness to the possibility of objective experience should thus become clearer, and I shall relate my findings to my earlier assertion that the issue of reflexive consciousness is an important focus for thinkers in the idealist and romantic traditions immediately following Kant. I will illustrate this connection with reference to the work of Schelling and Coleridge, in furtherance of my aim, stated at the beginning of this chapter, of locating central themes to be encountered in the conceptual landscape that I will be exploring in the chapters to come. In the process, the link between Schelling's thinking and that

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<sup>243</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A108-109.

<sup>244</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A107-109.

<sup>245</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A109-110.

<sup>246</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A116-119.

of Henri Bergson, the focus of my next chapter, will come to light, as we see how each in his own way responded to Kant.

For Kant, empirical self-awareness is always mediated by the temporal form of experiential receptivity, and therefore one only knows oneself indirectly as an empirical ego, or as one is affected by oneself through the formal conditions of inner sense.<sup>247</sup> As distinct from such empirical self-awareness, and conditioning its possibility, the 'I' of transcendental apperception is merely an awareness of thinking.<sup>248</sup> It is a merely intellectual consciousness in that it is independent of all intuition, as what must be able to accompany all intuition.<sup>249</sup>

Kantian time-consciousness in general, just like the possibility of empirical self-consciousness (which possibility it enables), relies on an awareness of objective permanence, as time's necessarily indirect representation. The transcendental unity of apperception that is made possible by the awareness of such permanence, however, only gives the possibility of an 'I' in the form of an intellectual awareness of an identity in thinking which must be able to accompany any possible representation,<sup>250</sup> as conforming to one conscious stream. While something really is given in this 'I think', we can have no concept of this something: a self-in-itself cannot even properly, or objectively, be known to 'exist', therefore, since this would bring the non-empirical ground of the representation 'I' under the concept of existence,<sup>251</sup> while any use of such a concept is only warranted within empirical experience.

All we seem to be able to claim is a 'feeling of an existence' of an 'I',<sup>252</sup> as Kant suggests in his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*.<sup>253</sup> But neither can this awareness be properly described as a 'feeling', since it is intellectual, and thus an activity of consciousness. Feeling implies passivity, and the receptive form of intuition proper to humanity. But as in part passive and receptive, humans are incapable of what Kant hypothesises, by contrast, as a divine, self-constitutive 'intellectual intuition', so the thought of 'I' that is bound up with the transcendental unity of apperception is highly ambiguous, as identifiable neither in a conceptual act nor a receptive intuition, properly speaking. It should be recalled that the imagination, as it has entered our discussion so far, has been described in such ambiguous terms. This connection will be important.

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<sup>247</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B69, B153.

<sup>248</sup> Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 148.

<sup>249</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B278/A107.

<sup>250</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B131.

<sup>251</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B423.

<sup>252</sup> Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 148.

<sup>253</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics* (revised edition), Gary Hatfield (tr. and ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 334.

Kant suggests that, in apperception, ‘I am conscious of myself, neither as I appear, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am’.<sup>254</sup> This perhaps could be described as a ‘negative knowledge’, in the sense discussed above: a knowledge of the boundedness of knowledge.<sup>255</sup> I can think that I am, but I cannot know what I am as other than phenomenally reflected, as empirical ego. Thus empirical self-acquaintance does not constitute direct self-knowledge, as one would be habitually inclined to believe.

Transcendental apperception is thus a manifestation of activity to thought alone, working without intuition.<sup>256</sup> Without intuition, such mere thought cannot yield knowledge of the self in itself, as any possible human knowledge must be sensibly conditioned. Such sensible, spatio-temporal intuition could not be available for the apperceptive awareness in principle, and this is because transcendental apperception is the ultimate spontaneous source of the pure intuition of time as the formal condition of all sensible intuition, a pure intuition enabled through the medium of productive imagination which apperception directs. Manifesting to thought as such spontaneous synthesising activity, the transcendental self therefore cannot, itself, be intuited: it cannot be intuitively caught in the act of enabling intuition. Only an infinite knowledge could be ‘self-active’,<sup>257</sup> or self-creative, determining its own existence through a purely intuitive knowing, without a receptive dependence on sensible intuition. In the next chapter we shall see how Schelling takes issue with this limitation, by claiming an intellectual intuition into the source of subjective awareness.

#### **(4.4) Ontology through subjectivity after Kant**

The predicament of self-knowledge, as seen from a Kantian perspective – as always a matter of indirect awareness in empirical appearance – is taken up in post-Kantian aesthetics, in an attempt to overcome what was perceived as Kant’s epistemological dualism of phenomenal and noumenal aspects of reality.<sup>258</sup> As we saw in chapter one, romantics such as Wackenroder think that such a metaphysical holism is achievable through the manifestation, in aesthetic intuition, of the infinite ground of the phenomenal self through the indeterminate meaningfulness of absolute, or purely instrumental music, regarded as a language over and above the verbal language of finite, conceptual determinations.<sup>259</sup> Like Wackenroder, Schelling, (as we shall see in the next chapter), and Coleridge, (as we shall discover in chapters six and seven), regard aesthetic creativity as capable of bringing about an awareness of an infinite, creative ground of

<sup>254</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B157-158.

<sup>255</sup> Gardner, *Kant and the Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 149.

<sup>256</sup> In the next few paragraphs I am drawing on Bossart’s article ‘Kant’s Transcendental Deduction’, pp. 383-403.

<sup>257</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B158.

<sup>258</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B69/B153.

<sup>259</sup> See, for example, Carl Dahlhaus, *The Idea of Absolute Music*, pp. 60-1.



selfhood through finite consciousness, an aesthetic disclosure of the eternal, or trans-temporal source of subjectivity through the intuitive form of time.<sup>260</sup>

It is in acknowledgement of Kant's claim that it is impossible for the understanding to know its own ground determinately, that idealist and romantic claims for the ontological significance of aesthetic, indeterminate intuition come to be put forward by Kant's immediate successors. Accordingly, Fichte and the early Schelling postulate an act of intellectual intuition (as we have seen, a possibility denied by Kant) as the practical, or subjectively active, principle of their philosophies.<sup>261</sup>

That a practical postulate is made to serve as a highest metaphysical principle is highly significant, since it headlines the new, post-Kantian basis on which ontological thought is to be constructed.<sup>262</sup> After Kant's critique, metaphysics is no longer possible as an objective, theoretical statement of the nature of ultimate reality, into which the subject must be fitted. From now on any metaphysic will only be possible as a mode of seeing the world: as channelled through subjectivity. This practical basis for metaphysics does not mean, however, that ontology is dissolved into a mere question of relative subjective preferences and opinions by post-Kantian thinkers, but that one's active mode of relation to reality through time becomes inseparable from any metaphysical claims which might be made.<sup>263</sup> Ontological truth, for romantics, as for Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism, becomes intrinsically connected to criteria of personal authenticity and commitment. After Kant, any metaphysical account will have to take a detour through subjective engagement, and will be inseparable from the issue of insight.<sup>264</sup>

## **(5) Summary and Prospect**

We have just learned that in certain varieties of what may broadly be described as romantic thought, a claim is made for an aesthetically or imaginatively mediated participation in ontological truth. We have seen in this chapter that such a claim is built on three, related Kantian theses, namely, **(a)**, the opaqueness of the transcendental source of the self from the empirical perspective of conceptually mediated experience, and **(b)**, the intrinsic temporality of

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<sup>260</sup> But in the case of Coleridge, this description will be significantly qualified by the findings of chapter 7.

<sup>261</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Peter Heath (tr.), (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1978), pp. 13-14, 32, 98.

<sup>262</sup> See, for example, Michael Vater's introduction to Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. xviii.

<sup>263</sup> As evidenced, for example, in Kierkegaard's over-riding concern with *how* the existing individual is situated, or how personal becoming responds to a wider reality, natural, human and divine.

<sup>264</sup> Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, passim. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that even so 'scholastic' a philosophy as Thomism can take a subjective turn in the Post-Kantian era: Bernard Lonergan, especially, entitles his major work on Transcendental Thomism, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (fifth edition), Frederick E. Crowe & Robert M. Doran (ed.) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

the self, and (c), The productive role of imagination in enabling experience. These issues will loom large in chapters ahead.

As we have also learned, however, for Kant himself, transcendental subjectivity, as a condition for the possibility of the subject-object relation, is only signalled by the apperception ‘I think’ that must be able to accompany any empirical experience.<sup>265</sup> The representation ‘I’ is what Kant suggests as a signpost for interpreting his position on the issue of a fundamentally necessary and transcendental subjective unity, a unity that can only be apperceived in a thought of self lacking all conceptual determination.

We have seen, with Kant, that if experience is to be possible at all, it cannot flow in multiple streams; experience, as a unity of thought and intuition, if it is to exist at all, can only do so as a focused connectedness in time, and something actual and more than empirical must be thought to enable this possibility as its noumenal condition: this thought of a self-in-itself is symbolised by the ‘I’ which must be able to accompany any possible experience. However, for Kant, nothing may be determinately known of this extra-experiential condition. But even on Kant’s terms, as discussed above, the criterion of experience, the condition of its possibility, is not so much the thought, ‘I’, which must be able to accompany any human experience; rather it is the always prior, but conceptually indeterminable, act of unifying the manifold which makes such a reflective thought of self possible.

We shall soon see, in addressing Schelling’s *Transcendental Idealism*, that it is this very act that becomes the focus of an intellectual intuition, through which imaginatively mediated insight into the temporal process of the ground of selfhood’s emergence into consciousness becomes possible. Such is, at least, Schelling’s claim. With such a move, metaphysics is not so much reinstated as placed on a transcendental and dynamic footing, its principle no longer to be found in theoretical pseudo-objectivity – Kant’s dogmatism – but in the practically postulated, intuitive demand, to which attention was drawn at the end of the last section.

We have learned that certain post-Kantian thinkers try to move beyond Kant’s position in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, as addressed in this chapter, while engaging with his findings. We are about to learn that, for Schelling, this involves turning to Kant’s third critical work, *The Critique of Judgement*. As indicated already, the perceived inadequacy of Kant’s account of time to grasp a vitally creative, dynamic ground of existence is also noted by Henri Bergson. Like Schelling, as we are about to see, Bergson claims the need for a personal, philosophical

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<sup>265</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.

intuition of genuine temporal movement, as opposed to the linear, spatially-translated conception of time that the Kantian, calculative understanding abstracts from real becoming.

Therefore it is to the thought of Bergson and Schelling, in relation to Kant's account of aesthetics and teleology in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* that I now turn, as a comparative analysis of the way Kant's findings are handled and criticised by Schelling and Bergson will lead us towards a philosophical criterion concerning the incalculability of temporal process. This philosophical criterion will, in turn, enable us to discriminate between aesthetic accounts of transcendence, in terms of their compatibility with Kierkegaard's theological position concerning the paradoxical incalculability of Christian revelation. Through this procedure I thus approach the goal of my thesis: the theoretical reconciliation of Kierkegaardian theology with the aesthetic practice through which he communicates it.

## IV

### Time as Creative Process

#### Introduction: Kant, Bergson and Schelling; metaphysical time as organically meaningful

In this chapter it will be shown that Kant's analysis of organic phenomena or 'natural purposes', in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*,<sup>266</sup> is centrally related to the theme of imaginatively participative insight into the polar structure of reality in strands of post-Kantian metaphysical thought. We have already met an example of polar, or dialectical thinking in addressing Hegelianism in chapter one.

Organisms, as defined by Kant,<sup>267</sup> share the same essentially polar structure as the dynamic, holistic explanatory model on which varieties of romantic and idealist metaphysics depend.<sup>268</sup> Mechanical explanation is, for such metaphysicians, relativised by Kant's insight into the mutually constitutive, co-dependency of whole and parts in organic structures, since such intrinsic purposefulness cannot be accounted for in terms of causal necessity alone.<sup>269</sup> Organisms thus defy complete explanation in terms of Kant's transcendental categories of the understanding, which we saw in the last chapter to be for Kant the conceptual conditions of any possible knowledge. It will become clear that organic structure, as Kant sees it, demands a more holistic and interpretative approach.

I will be showing how Kant's account of organic teleology relates to his aesthetic thinking, and how such Kantian themes are resorted to by later thinkers such as Schelling and Bergson in the interests of a more holistic explanatory model. Elements of Kant's aesthetic account are of crucial importance to the goal of this thesis, because of Kant's reading of the non-determining or logically indeterminate role of concepts when set into 'free play' with the imagination, in aesthetic perception and production.<sup>270</sup> Such meaningful logical indeterminacy, or the intimation of meaning through aesthetic perception, is what we must look to for the kind of aesthetic account of transcendence capable of harmonisation with Kierkegaard's concept of paradoxical faith.

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<sup>266</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (trs.) Paul Guyer (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>267</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 65.

<sup>268</sup> Frederick Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 139-40; F.W.J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, Errol E. Harris & Peter Heath (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 137-42.

<sup>269</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 65.

<sup>270</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9.

This chapter aims to show, in relation to Kant's account of organic teleology and aesthetics, that Bergson's vitalist metaphysics follows earlier patterns of romantic thought in building on Kant's insights into organic process and aesthetic judgement.<sup>271</sup> Focusing on Bergson and Schelling in relation to Kant, I propose to show that post-Kantian metaphysical thinkers accept Kant's limitation of human conceptual understanding, but offer their own forms of 'transcendental deduction' of a qualitatively different, intuitive mode of knowing on which the determinate conceptuality of empirical knowledge is shown to depend for its possibility.<sup>272</sup> Kant's conception of knowledge is thus expanded from within his own epistemological framework. I explain that in the thought of both Schelling and Bergson, such intuitively grounded knowledge is itself deemed a participation in a dynamic act of ontological becoming.<sup>273</sup> Bergson and Schelling, in their own ways seek to access the qualitatively rich movement of a creative process that empirical investigation distorts through its sole focus on the quantitatively calculable.<sup>274</sup>

We will discover as this chapter progresses that for Bergson and Schelling, in their different ways, imaginatively mediated intuition overcomes the Kantian distinction of phenomena and things in themselves to reveal creative, temporal process to be the ground both of Kant's phenomenal objects, and the empirical understanding which apprehends them.<sup>275</sup> In Schelling's terms, phenomenal subjectivity and objectivity inter-depend organically, as stemming from a common productive root: nature is 'invisible mind', mind's own otherness, while mind is 'invisible nature', nature's own otherness.<sup>276</sup>

In relation to Bergson, especially, it will be suggested that Kant's understanding of time is found wanting, as a mere abstraction from the actuality of the living process Bergson's philosophy sets out to describe.<sup>277</sup> Bergson contends that the true nature of temporal duration can only be grasped through an imaginative and intuitive participation in its actual flow, as the ground of one's own subjectivity.<sup>278</sup> I show that through a similar act of aesthetic intuition, Schelling claims to discover the activity that makes Kant's transcendental subjectivity (as described in the last chapter) possible: a self-positing activity through which space and time come to be as forms of inner and outer sense.<sup>279</sup> Accepting Kantian strictures against dogmatic metaphysics, epistemology thus becomes the frame through which Schelling and Bergson, each in his own way, discover an ontologically productive, organic process. But it will be the

<sup>271</sup> Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, (London: Pimlico, 2000), p. 98.

<sup>272</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, p. 81.

<sup>273</sup> F.W.J. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 9, 28, 47-50; Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 161-2.

<sup>274</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 347-359; Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, pp. 17-27.

<sup>275</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 1-12; Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 13-14.

<sup>276</sup> Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, p. 42.

<sup>277</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, F. L. Pogson (tr.) (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2001), pp. 232-40.

<sup>278</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 161-2.

<sup>279</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 13-14, 32, 98.

conclusion of this chapter that Schelling offers an unsuitable model of dynamic creativity, at least for the purposes of this thesis, on Kierkegaardian theological grounds.<sup>280</sup>

It will be suggested that only a Bergsonian, aesthetically mediated conception of metaphysical truth might accord with Kierkegaard's concept of paradoxical revelation, and thus that any aesthetic encounter with transcendence – as that which we are seek throughout this thesis – must measure up to such a Bergsonian criterion if it is to harmonise with Kierkegaard's theology. We have discovered grounds to regard the Kierkegaardian account as in need of such aesthetic completion, and the discovery of a suitable aesthetic of transcendence is the ultimate goal of this work, as made clear in chapter two.

Thus it is with Bergson's criticism of the Kantian or 'spatialised' temporality which we met with in the last chapter that I will begin, as Bergson's findings provide a metaphysical rationale for the kind of ontologically dynamic and aesthetically indeterminate accounts that I will be addressing in following chapters. It is through the critical examination which I shall be offering in this chapter of accounts of metaphysical process that we will be guided in the remainder of this thesis towards a suitably open-ended, or romantically intimative understanding of the aesthetic encounter with transcendence; an understanding that can be shown to accord with a Kierkegaardian or paradoxical concept of revelation.

### **(1) Bergson: The difference between movement and concepts of movement**

It has been shown in chapter three that time, or the form of inner sense, as Kant understands it, can never be directly intuited. A representation of permanence in spatial outer sense is necessary if there is to be awareness of alteration as contained in one time. Moreover, Kant shows that we can only thus represent time by imaginatively constructing a line in the form of outer sense, geometrically. This line must in principle be continuable *ad infinitum*. We have seen that, as a geometrical construct in outer sense, we always know how to keep the line going on which our understanding of time depends, since spatial relationships are formal, *a priori* conditions of awareness. Awareness of time, for Kant, is thus a matter of addition of homogeneous marks according to a method, and it was shown that this numerical method constitutes a spatial schema of the pure concept of quantity. Empirical awareness of time is therefore ultimately a quantitative assessment.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>280</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 46-9.

<sup>281</sup> See chapter 3, section 2.

We will see Bergson insisting that such a quantitative assessment is a mere conceptual translation of real experiential time, which as a concrete and growing, qualitative whole can never be adequately accounted for as cut up through determinate conceptual analysis. Truly productive or synthetic process is distorted by the conceptuality that seeks to contain it, delimit it, and thus reduce it to conceptual measure. Bergson thus holds that Kant offers us a spatialised and quantified conception of time that itself depends on a more original, qualitative assessment of productive metaphysical process, which he labels ‘duration’.<sup>282</sup>

Bergson objects to the Kantian account that in knowing that the spatial ‘time-line’ is infinitely extendable, we always know, in principle, exactly how it can be determined in advance.<sup>283</sup> Time is thus necessarily pre-determined, with no room for real qualitative growth or novelty, for true creativity. Put simply, there is no account offered by Kant of the actual movement of which his ‘time-line’ is merely a tracing of positions already passed through: there is no Kantian account of the passing-through, which Bergson regards as the essence of time, and as such, the motive principle of reality, both material and ideal.<sup>284</sup> More will be said of the nature of such reality in our final section.

Bergson would in fact agree that as a practical adaptation, or simplification of reality for purposes of efficient action, conceptually determined knowledge must be blind to the genuine novelty and freedom made possible by duration, which he holds to be in itself a creatively dynamic process.<sup>285</sup> Such freedom is lost in the conceptuality of causal accounts in terms of determinate empirical knowledge. Such accounts can only collect past moments, or conceptual ‘snapshots’<sup>286</sup> analytically incised from time’s ever-changing movement.<sup>287</sup> Such finite conceptual judgements are abstracted from the actual flow of experience in order to be re-arranged, re-connected like beads on a string: the string of the Kantian time-line laid out in terms of space.<sup>288</sup> But over and above the abstract skeleton of Kant’s quantitative, spatially translated time, (and Bergson contends, as its condition of possibility), Bergson insists that real temporal duration just is a dynamic and content-forming, organic process of growth.<sup>289</sup> Bergson points out that the act of connecting points on Kant’s spatialised time-line takes time, as we undergo transition in the progress from point to point.<sup>290</sup> Kant’s concept of time abstracts from

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<sup>282</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 232-40.

<sup>283</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 17-19; Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 379-82.

<sup>284</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 10.

<sup>285</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 205-10.

<sup>286</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 333.

<sup>287</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 355-7.

<sup>288</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 355-7.

<sup>289</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 252-4.

<sup>290</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 10.

this 'duration', as Bergson terms it, and is therefore blind to the evolving reality of movement.<sup>291</sup>

In his 'Introduction to Metaphysics',<sup>292</sup> Bergson looks at the difference between a qualitative intuition of consciousness as a process of becoming, and the same process as conceptually quantified through empirical psychological analysis, in which pure durational wholeness is spatially translated in terms of extensive, and thus measurable, 'states'.<sup>293</sup> Bergson imagines himself conducting such a psychological, conceptual reconstruction of conscious process out of supposedly elementary atomic units or states, as linked together and measured according to a spatial understanding of time; but he does so only in order to point out the philosophical inadequacies of this essentially reductionist, mosaic procedure. Bergson aims to show that static, abstracted parts of experience cannot be reconstructed to account for the seamless, yet qualitatively rich diversity of conscious experience:

My analysis [into quantitatively discreet psychological states]...easily resolves the inner life into states each of which is homogeneous to itself; only since the homogeneity spreads out over a definite number of minutes or seconds, the elementary psychological state does not cease to have duration, though it does not change. But who does not see that that the definite number of minutes and seconds I attribute to the elementary psychological state has no more than the value of an indication meant to remind me that the psychological state, supposedly homogeneous, is in reality a state which changes and endures? The state, taken in itself, is a perpetual becoming.<sup>294</sup>

Here Bergson is indicating a move beyond the sphere of determinate empirical knowledge, as quantified or spatialised consciousness dissolves, in the light of what he claims to be 'philosophical intuition',<sup>295</sup> to reveal its own flowing and fertile source. Bergson suggests that the empirical psychologist abstracts a certain quantitative average from a moving whole of undivided and unique qualitative relations, and that this extract is then identified in terms of a general and invariable concept, by the investigator. A static state has thereby been artificially constituted and made to 'stand for' a qualitatively seamless process, through the activity of the psychologist. To measure the duration of such a state, and thus, in effect, to translate a real duration into something other than itself, empirical time-consciousness, or a becoming 'in general', has been extracted or abstracted: 'a becoming that would no more be the becoming of this or that, and this is what [has been] called the time the state occupies'. Such abstract and

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<sup>291</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 236-7

<sup>292</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 159-200.

<sup>293</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 178-182.

<sup>294</sup> Bergson, in *The Creative Mind*, p. 179.

<sup>295</sup> This is a problematic concept in Bergson's thinking that will be addressed in more detail in the next chapter.



spatialised time 'is as immobile for me as the state I localise in it'.<sup>296</sup> Bergson contends that what is distorted by the positing of a conceptual state actually flows as a continuous diversification of quality. Without its intrinsic qualities, such a quantified state is immobilised and thus falsified.

Bergson suggests that the homogeneous time of measurement is only a tool with which to compare actual concrete durations. It permits us 'to count simultaneities and to measure one flowing of duration in relation to another'.<sup>297</sup> While analysis can only deal with immobility, Bergson claims that the philosophical intuition on which he bases his own account is literally 'located in' concrete duration as a participative raising to consciousness of what always underlies ordinary empirical awareness.<sup>298</sup> The difference between analysis and Bergsonian intuition is the difference between empirical investigation and metaphysics, between the clock-time to which we are habituated and a focused attention on the flowing nature of experience which underlies that clock-time, and of which clock-time is a utilitarian abbreviation, a conceptual abstraction.<sup>299</sup>

Bergson contends that what is decomposed for purposes of analysis can never be reconstructed into its original flowing wholeness. No more can actual duration be intuited through static concepts than a mosaic image of a swimmer could ever be mistaken for the actual experience of swimming.<sup>300</sup> No matter how small the mosaic tiles, no matter how fine the grain of the printed image, or how high the definition on the television or computer screen achieved through sheer multiplication of pixels, the qualitative wholeness of moving reality can never be re-manifested. The problem as Bergson sees it is that the moving whole of temporal activity is not composed of parts in the first place: what did not start out as an assemblage of components cannot be re-composed out of parts.<sup>301</sup>

Simple duration, a concrete or content rich productivity, is the essence of reality in itself as Bergson sees it, can be subdivided to infinity by conceptual procedures, but is in itself purely qualitative. Finite, abstract concepts cannot deal with living wholes, as was noted by the Parmenidean philosopher, Zeno of Elea. Zeno's paradox states that Achilles could never catch up with a tortoise no matter how fast he ran, since to the quantifying, conceptual understanding, there would always be an infinite divisibility in the distance that still had to be covered before overtaking. This measurement of time, as if with a ruler the gradations of which would have to

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<sup>296</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 179-80.

<sup>297</sup> Bergson *The Creative Mind*, p.180.

<sup>298</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 180.

<sup>299</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 209-10.

<sup>300</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 203 -4.

<sup>301</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 170-4.

be sub-divided to infinity, spatialises the essentially non-spatial reality of living movement. While Zeno thought that he was demonstrating the illusory nature of becoming, Bergson suggests that such paradoxes for thought indicate the incompetence of the spatialising understanding to deal with the ultimate reality of a living, creative or durational universe.<sup>302</sup>

External viewpoints on an ever-changing continuum are all that the empirical understanding can cope with, unless its natural, external direction – as evolved for the utilitarian manipulation of its environment – has been reversed to subserve the metaphysical aim of philosophical intuition.<sup>303</sup> It is to this epistemological principle of Bergson's philosophy that I now turn.

## **(2) Bergson's philosophical intuition, its content and its need for aesthetic communication**

In writing on Bergson I shall be continuing to draw on aspects of his thought to be found in his *Time and Free Will*, *Creative Evolution* and *Creative Mind*. I intend in this section to offer no more than an initial and brief orientation to the imaginative or conceptually indeterminate nature involved in Bergson's practice of communicating his philosophical intuition of time as universal duration, or ontological process. This will afford sufficient contextualisation as we move in section three to address the Kantian sources of such dynamically conceived metaphysics, as found in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement*.

The initial foray into Bergson's thought in this and the previous section will also provide contextualising material for comparison with the earlier post-Kantian metaphysics of Schelling, which will be introduced in what follows next, but which will be focused upon more fully in section four. This latter informed comparison is necessary to the progress of my thesis, as I intend to return to Bergson in more depth at the end of this chapter, to show that his criticism of Kant's quantified translation of time extends also to the Kantian concept of teleology, which will be addressed in section two, and on which Schelling can be shown to depend. I shall be arguing in chapter six that it is just this teleological problem that makes Samuel Taylor Coleridge's systematic account of the role of imagination in relation to our awareness of God inadequate from a Kierkegaardian theological perspective. I shall be going on to argue, in chapter seven, that other aspects of Coleridge's purely aesthetic thought do not fail this theological test when held up to such a Bergsonian philosophical criterion. The reasons for such an inadequacy of post-Kantian teleology from a Kierkegaardian theological perspective will be made clear in the course of this chapter.

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<sup>302</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 325-30.

<sup>303</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 176-80.

Bergson's critique of Kantian teleology, and thus of a Schellingian dynamic philosophy (which his own so closely resembles in other respects), will thus provide us with an important criterion to guide us later in this thesis towards an account of aesthetically intimated transcendence that is truly open-ended, or uncontainable within a finished conceptual scheme, and which is thus at least potentially in accord with Kierkegaard's concept of paradoxical revelation.

## **(2.1) Bergson and Schelling: philosophical intuition as the epistemological entry into metaphysics of process**

Due to the inadequacy of concepts to recapture durational wholeness, Bergson suggests that an intuition of duration as an ontologically creative process is needed, which each one must perform and experience for himself, and which can only be indirectly communicated through aesthetic imagery and descriptive interpretation. I will seek to explain the reasons for this claim.<sup>304</sup>

Bergson resembles the earlier thinker, Schelling, as will be seen, in postulating an act of intuition into durational process as a practical basis for philosophical investigation.<sup>305</sup> Bergson's content-rich duration is essentially un-objectifiable, since an objectification is a halt posited where in truth there is only continual creative movement.<sup>306</sup> True duration can only be non-objectively or participatively intuited.<sup>307</sup> Indirect, aesthetic language can point and prompt suggestively, but ultimately the true ground of philosophy is not a 'dogmatic' metaphysical principle, in the sense we have seen criticised by Kant, such as would lead to a conceptually determined, deductive account.<sup>308</sup> Philosophical intuition, the key by which the significance of Bergson's philosophy is unlocked, can only be accessed through a personal act of intuiting.<sup>309</sup> The notion of such a personal act, or *practical postulate*, as foundational for philosophy is shared by Schelling,<sup>310</sup> (and, as will be seen later in this thesis, also Coleridge). I will briefly indicate *why* such an act is regarded by these thinkers as essential to any possible metaphysical account.

Speaking very generally, I suggest that such post-Kantian metaphysical thinkers take note of the findings of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, (as addressed in the last chapter), taking account of Kant's argument for epistemological perspectivism, in order to surmount that Kantian limitation from within. Thus metaphysics no longer aims to reveal an external *arche* or *logos*. Rather it seeks to use the privileged insight into our own reality that is self-awareness, in order to access

<sup>304</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 177-88.

<sup>305</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 27-9.

<sup>306</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 181.

<sup>307</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 187.

<sup>308</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 366-74.

<sup>309</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 187.

<sup>310</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 27-9.

some living truth or productive principle which can then be discovered to be active ‘within’ objective phenomena, creatively enabling them.<sup>311</sup> The aim of this procedure is to reunite consciousness with what Kant dubbed the unknowable ‘thing in itself’, but conceived as an implicit consciousness, or formative intelligence at work in nature.<sup>312</sup> Such a metaphysical reunion is variously discovered in accounts of an ontologically productive, dynamic identity of subject and object, as the ground from which phenomenal subjectivity and objectivity (as addressed by Kant) develop in polar or organic relation, as we shall see as we progress in this chapter. The creative source of the empirical order is thus reconceived by post-Kantian thinkers such as Schelling, and, in his own distinctive way, by the much later Bergson, in terms of temporal process and organic growth. It is to this end that Bergson, like the Schelling of the *Transcendental Idealism* before him, makes an appeal to intellectual or philosophical intuition as the means of access to metaphysical truth, as noted above.

One way – but not a way offered by Bergson – of approaching the concept of intellectual intuition is to regard it as a non-conceptual ‘seeing’, which is thus neither knowing nor sensing purely, but rather an insight into the identity of active and passive poles of the mind, of subjectivity and objectivity, in which the intuiter and intuited are one. For Schelling, the philosopher creatively participates in the transcendental condition or source of his own self-consciousness, as reconceived in polar, dynamic terms, and which is thus also the condition of all possible objectivity.<sup>313</sup> This intuiting is regarded as light shed on the very activity through which self-consciousness is conditioned; but it should be recognised that as a participation in that ontologically constitutive activity, the philosopher’s intuition must also be thought, in another sense, as the dynamic source of reality and ideality bringing itself to light, such that the created and the creating need to be understood as a differentiated identity, or polarity. For Schelling (and also Coleridge), drawing on insights into electricity and magnetism, such metaphysical polarity is conceived as the manifestation of one power through two mutually conditioning forces (i.e., subjectivity and objectivity, activity and passivity).<sup>314</sup>

The summary just given of philosophical intuition is drawn from Schelling, whose account we will look at in more detail later on. Bergson is far less forthcoming, holding that no exact description can be given of philosophical intuition, but only of an aesthetic ‘mediating image’ to which the philosopher constantly turns in order to communicate his pre-conceptual intuition:

<sup>311</sup> See, for example, Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 332-7; Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 27-9.

<sup>312</sup> Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, pp. 41-2; Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 147-153.

<sup>313</sup> See chapter 3 section 4.1 for Kant’s account of the transcendental deduction, on which Schelling bases himself through an epistemological strategy clearly echoed in the Bergsonian appeal to philosophical intuition a century later: e.g. Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 21-33; Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, 188-92.

<sup>314</sup> See, for example, Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, *The Friend* 2 parts, Barbara Rooke (ed.), in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) vol. 4, part 1, p. 94; Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, pp. 114-21.

What is the intuition? If the philosopher has not been able to give the formula for it, we certainly are not able to do so. But what we shall manage to recapture and to hold is a certain intermediary image between the simplicity of the concrete intuition and the complexity of the abstractions which translate it.<sup>315</sup>

So Bergson suggests that philosophy is constructed by the philosopher ‘from within’, in accordance with a governing intuition in the form of a participative insight into duration’s seamless growth as he experiences it.<sup>316</sup> Durational process is a continuous emergence of qualitative novelty as glimpsed before its quantification, (or before Kant’s categorical schematisation), which cuts it up into conceptual moments to be ‘necessarily’ connected by a concept of causality.<sup>317</sup> Such causal determinism belies the continual emergence of qualitative novelty, which transforms perception of the past as much as that past can be said to influence the perception of what emerges from it.<sup>318</sup> Bergson holds that a philosophy that is awake to the progressive and retroactive emergence of continually unique qualitative change will reflect this awareness in the intrinsic co-implication of its diverse aspects within an overarching wholeness: ‘thus the various parts of the system will interpenetrate, as in a living being’.<sup>319</sup> But how can earlier and later aspects of experience as it flows be conceived as mutually influencing each other? For the moment I will suggest a relevant comparison, which will itself be followed up more fully in section two, as indicated in the introduction to this chapter.

A pointer to such co-dependency of parts is found most obviously in the structure of the natural organism, as we will see shortly when we come to Kant.<sup>320</sup> Organic parts depend on the whole which they make up, as much as that whole pre-supposes its constituent elements. Organism, as Kant notes, cannot be adequately explained in terms of causal mechanism, since the parts of which, in one sense, it may be said to consist are also intrinsically adapted to the purpose of the whole which they subserve. Such purposive functionality of the whole must consequently be held to be ‘prior’ to its parts, as an architect’s plan is the prior intelligibility of a whole edifice, pre-existing and ordering its concrete actualisation.<sup>321</sup>

But most importantly for illumination of Bergson’s concept of time, an organism’s parts must themselves be understood as mutually dependent.<sup>322</sup> For example, each organ of the human body is what it is and acts as it does because each other part of the body is as it is and acts as it does.

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<sup>315</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 109.

<sup>316</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 162-6.

<sup>317</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 184-5, 188.

<sup>318</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 181.

<sup>319</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 118.

<sup>320</sup> Kant, ‘Critique of the Teleological Power of Judgement’, in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 61-91.

<sup>321</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 64-66.

<sup>322</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 66.

The impairment of one organ impairs each of the others on which it is therefore reciprocally, or systematically, dependent. More will be said of these matters when we turn to Kant's account of teleology in section three, the term 'teleology' referring to an account of the appearance of such intelligible ordering in nature.

For the moment, though, enough has been said to orient the reader to the organic nature of Bergson's concept of time: Bergsonian duration is a paradox to the conceptual understanding, since the earlier, as well as creatively informing the later, is reciprocally related to it, and itself transformed by that to which it has given birth.<sup>323</sup> Metaphysical intuition can see into the truth of continuous transformation, both progressive and retroactive. At present, I intend only that the reader note that Bergson regards time as similarly organic in qualitative structure to a natural organism. We have learned that a special intuition or mode of insight into organic duration is required, according to Bergson, since the logic governing standard conceptual accounts is uni-directional. Just as the natural organism cannot be adequately explained in the uni-linear terms of mechanistic causality, so the uni-directional, or spatialised logical order of determinate conceptuality is blind to the qualitative interaction, 'backwards and forwards' – thus conceptuality drives one into spatial metaphors – of durational flow.

For Bergson, what *was* influences what can become, but in the light of that becoming, what *was* takes on a new qualitative aspect. In a real sense, the past can be said to be altered by the future.<sup>324</sup> But Bergson contends that insight into time as a current continuously pouring forth unique qualitative changes is lost when time is conceptualised, or cut up into moments of 'before' and after'.<sup>325</sup> Much more clarity should be shed on Bergson's account of time in my final section, which is designed to show a crucial difference between his conception of organic duration, and the Kantian concept of teleology.

## **(2.2) Bergson and the need for aesthetic communication of the philosopher's intuition**

We have discussed Bergson's concept of philosophical intuition into durational flow, and now turn to his conception of the philosophical communication of such intuition. We take this step since it constitutes a stage in the uniting, in our thinking, of the issue of aesthetic perception with the thought of a kind of open-ended, or intrinsically unpredictable creative process. Such creative activity – and, as retroactively operative, re-creative or perhaps redemptive activity –

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<sup>323</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 26. Thus Bergson denies the concept of potentiality in arguing for the unforeseeability of genuinely creative growth. What can (now) be discerned in the past in view of subsequent developments was not previously implicit in any earlier developmental stage (as if latent and yet to unfold). The emerging and qualitatively unique present creates genuinely new aspects to be discerned in the past, time being a moving, growing continuum in which nothing is lost, but which is in constant qualitative transformation. This opposition of a doctrine of potentiality, or meontology, will become relevant in relation to discussions of Coleridge's systematic thought in chapter six.

<sup>324</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 19-27.

<sup>325</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 17, 149.

may be aesthetically intimated, but can never be conceptually controlled or contained, and thus might be said to accord with the objectively unknowable structure of the Kierkegaardian revelation of salvation in Christ.

Bergson's philosophical construction and communication is an essentially poetic process, since he holds that only an aesthetically indeterminate use of language can transgress the limits of logical order so as to gesture, suggestively, towards what he holds to be the seamless continuity of qualitative temporal transformations.<sup>326</sup> Like the iridescence of light on oily water, such transformations in the qualitative content of experience as it flows are intrinsically gradual and thus elude the reticulations of any conceptual net.

For Bergson, concepts are obstacles: the necessarily abstract mosaic tiles, or the pixels, with which he hopes to externalise as justly as possible the uniquely holistic insights into creative process that he has glimpsed in his intuition. For Bergson, therefore, imagination must mediate conceptuality. Imagination plays a crucial, mediating role in communicating the durational insights of philosophical intuition.<sup>327</sup> Bergson contends that the philosopher must first express to himself his strictly un-translatable intuition through a central, semantically rich image. Philosophical communication is then said to proceed from a dynamic, non-conceptual intuition to static conceptuality via an imaginatively creative use of language.<sup>328</sup>

The philosopher's guiding focal image – the reflection of intellectual intuition in imagination – is described by Bergson as

almost matter [i.e. material] in that it still allows itself to be seen, and almost mind [i.e. ideal] in that it no longer allows itself to be touched – a phantom which haunts us while we turn about the doctrine and to which we must go in order to obtain the decisive signal, the indication of the attitude to take [with reference to the pure intuition] and of the point from which to look.<sup>329</sup>

Here Bergson is close to Schelling's polar concept of the philosophical intuition, which we met earlier, as neither ideal nor real solely. More will be said of Schelling's conception later. Bergson's contention that it is the imagination's ability to hold matter and form in productive, and in a sense, polar, tension recalls what we discovered at the heart of Kierkegaard's concept of imaginative activity in chapter one. It will be important in light of arguments later in the chapter to remember that Kierkegaard, according to Ferreira, speaks thus of imaginative mediation in terms of a productive tension of opposites, while Schelling's polar dialectical logic

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<sup>326</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 163-6.

<sup>327</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 109-10.

<sup>328</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 162-6.

<sup>329</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 118.

would resolve oppositions into a determinable higher third term. In this his procedure would be subject to the same Kierkegaardian critique as we found levelled at Hegelianism in chapter one.

For Bergson, philosophical communication is a poetic process organised from within, organically. Bergson sums up his position thus: '[...] philosophy resembles an organism rather than an assemblage, and it is better to speak of evolution in this case than of composition'.<sup>330</sup> For Bergson, in intellectual intuition, it is as if the power of understanding were turned inwards, against its natural tendency, in order to establish a 'contact',<sup>331</sup> a participative unity with its own essential becoming, as rooted in the flow of universal duration. In his choice of terms, we can see that Bergson stresses the tactile intimacy of philosophical intuition. He does however invoke the visual figure of an 'image' to interpret the mediating role of imagination in guiding philosophical composition.

We have seen that imaginative imagery, perhaps inchoately, guides philosophical thought which is itself conceived as a temporal continuity or process. In this role of mediating between readily available concepts and the uniqueness of a durational intuition, Bergson speaks of the philosopher's guiding 'vision'.<sup>332</sup> In Bergson's thought, therefore, it would be inadequate to describe phenomenal objectivity as constructed out of basic elements, since his intuition relativises the empirical standpoint. As with material objects, so it is with Bergson's own process of philosophical communication. Reading without a sympathetic intuition,<sup>333</sup> one thinks that conceptual components have been assembled like a police 'identikit' picture, or a jigsaw puzzle. A non-participative understanding of Bergson's position can utilise and perceive only ready-made concepts, that have to be assembled into a mosaic picture. But this is only a translation of the real philosophical labour. Of course, ready-made language is utilised by the philosopher, but only as adapted, even transformed, in the service of philosophical intuition, in the attempt to develop imaginatively unique conceptual structures. The imaginative image guides an aesthetic activity, as the philosopher seeks to turn around the understanding, to adapt to an inward intuition of duration concepts that are properly at home in spatial assessments and calculations.<sup>334</sup>

In this process, it is the imaginatively guided intuition that enables a unique concept, tailoring static forms to a living movement.<sup>335</sup> Of course the tailoring image breaks down, as must all conceptual translation of living durational wholeness, precisely at the point where one's

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<sup>330</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 111.

<sup>331</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 118.

<sup>332</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 118.

<sup>333</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 161.

<sup>334</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 175.

<sup>335</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 175.



understanding, led by its 'at-home-ness' in the spatial 'natural habitat' of concepts, wants to literalise the image, to force duration onto its spatial home-ground. One would like to say that the intuition is clothed in concepts cut to its unique shape, but duration has no spatial shape. Therefore the concept, 'shape', must be taken as part of the imagery of tailoring.

We have now learned that Bergson sees the need for his philosophical intuition to be imaginatively mediated. However, as already indicated, Bergson can offer no clear account of the nature of the philosophical intuition itself, as somehow a pre-conceptual – and thus unformulable – act-of-intuiting whose reality can only be verified in its performance by the individual thinker, and which, as non-conceptual, cannot be adequately described in objective terms.<sup>336</sup> This is Bergson's contention, but I shall show reason in the next chapter to suggest that his philosophical intuition can be adequately described simply as an aesthetic act *tout court*, or in other words, in terms of indeterminate, as opposed to determinate, conceptuality.

When we return to Bergson in section five below, it will be in light of what is covered in the intervening sections on Kantian teleology and aesthetics, and Schelling's romantic/idealist utilisation of Kantian teleological and aesthetic themes. We will then be in a position to see that Bergson's thinking is importantly different to both Kant and post-Kantian idealism (as represented by Schelling), in that Bergson's critique of Kant's spatialisation of time as blind to process, as addressed earlier, extends to Kant's account of organic teleology, or creative development. Bergson's organic time will be shown to be following courses that cannot be predicted.

In a nutshell, it will be found that just as Kant draws a timeline, so Schelling plots a trajectory which has for its presupposition the Kantian linear reconstruction or spatialisation of originally durational temporality. It will be suggested that because of the Kantian temporality which he assumes, Schelling cannot address himself to the actual flow of progressive activity. It will emerge that the dialectical thinking through which Schelling hopes to explain the organic nature of creative process misses its true nature by seeking to impose upon it yet another form of logical net.<sup>337</sup> Schelling turns metaphorical or aesthetic insights into dynamic movement, in terms of organic polarity, into the means for constructing a determinate account of creative metaphysical process. It is the refusal by Bergson, in his own account of ontological process, of the 'time-line' of Kantian teleology that will offer us the first important criterion to distinguish between metaphysical accounts involving concepts of imagination and process that do and do not accord with a Kierkegaardian or paradoxical notion of transcendent revelation. These

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<sup>336</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 108-12.

<sup>337</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 29-30.

discussions will thus advance the aims of this thesis, as laid out towards the end of chapter two, above.

### **(3) Aspects of Kant's Aesthetics and Teleology**

I have been drawing attention in the last section to the aesthetic nature of philosophical communication, (as distinct from the 'mysterious' intuition itself), as Bergson himself understands it. I have addressed Bergson's account of such communication's necessary conceptual indirectness. I have also noted Bergson's need to write imaginatively, in order to prompt the reader's self-intuition of the durational reality grounding his own experience. In this section I shall be showing that Kant himself unwittingly provided the impetus for such an understanding of the role of indeterminate conceptuality in the perception of reality-as-process. It will be shown that it is Kant's treatment in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* of aesthetics and organic teleology in terms of indeterminate conceptuality which prompts Schelling's romantic/idealist metaphysics at the beginning of the nineteenth century, as well as Bergson's vitalism, albeit indirectly, at the turn of the twentieth. I only intend to indicate features of Kant's aesthetic and teleological accounts that are of direct relevance to the discussions of Schelling and Bergson which follow.

In his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, Kant's thinking discloses the incapacity of logically determined, empirical understanding to explain mechanistically important swathes of human experience. It is to the aesthetic aspect of Kant's thought that I shall turn in the next two subsections. In that which follows I shall give some indication of Kant's teleological account. In further sections I shall show that it is through attention to such areas of experience that post-Kantian thinkers seek to re-open a door to metaphysical thought. It will be shown then that the issues introduced in this section on Kant – teleological process and imaginative creativity and judgement – are central to the renewal of metaphysical thought in the century after Kant. It is to certain aspects of aesthetics as dealt with in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgement* that I now briefly turn.

#### **(3.1) Aspects of Kant's Aesthetics: Judgements of Taste**

As a purely formal, disinterested judgement (one that takes no interest in the existence of the object contemplated either to know, desire, or use it),<sup>338</sup> the feeling of approval of a beautiful presentation is related to our cognitive faculties, which, as we have learned from the *Critique of Pure Reason*, are responsible for all formal, or intelligible factors in the constitution of the objective pole of possible experience. But this feeling of approval cannot amount to something

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<sup>338</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 2.

empirically known, in the precise sense of objective knowledge which Kant has analysed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This is because the appreciation of pure beauty involves a disinterested relation to an object, while any act of empirical knowledge expresses the fulfilling of our cognitive interests, knowledge being the purpose of our cognitive equipment.<sup>339</sup>

Judgements of taste, or of aesthetic beauty, will not bring a cognitively determining concept to bear, as in empirical knowledge on the Kantian model, but will seek for a concept to determine the exact nature of the pleasure-arousing appearance, and yet will necessarily fail to find a single one that is adequate to the beautiful experience, although interpretation will employ many concepts indeterminately to deepen engagement and appreciation of the beauty enjoyed.<sup>340</sup> A judgement of beauty is thus indeterminate, that is, nothing will actually be known through such a judgement. But that rational judgement can be sought at all in such a situation is due to the fact that an appearance's formal (i.e., cognitively related) qualities awaken the disinterested, and therefore undetermined, activity of the faculty of cognition. Judgement is thus invoked in the consideration of a disinterested pleasure that has been awakened in the understanding; a feeling of free play, as Kant describes it, deriving primarily from the open-ended, responsive excitement of the imagination in relation to the form of the presentation it engages with, but also involving the understanding's conceptual capacity.<sup>341</sup>

Thus the two formal factors involved in knowledge, the imagination and conceptuality, are set free by beautiful forms to flex themselves, or resonate with one another, thereby evoking a purely mental feeling of satisfaction or pleasure.<sup>342</sup> The imaginative and conceptual factors involved in the act of understanding are thus stimulated to exercise and awareness of their own nature and purpose – which is to know.<sup>343</sup> And yet nothing is known through the aesthetic judgement. In the appreciation of beauty, imagination alerts conceptuality to undertake an inventory of its stock, seeking to suggest solutions, to reach out for a determining answer to the conundrum of a beautiful formal purposiveness that is, however, completely redundant as far as any utilitarian considerations are concerned.<sup>344</sup> In seeking for a concept, the understanding is led not towards determination, but into the potentially inexhaustible process of interpretation through suggestive, imaginatively indeterminate conceptuality.<sup>345</sup> As empirically purposeless, such imaginative conceptual interpretation can lead to no conceptual resolution. For example, in the appreciation of the beauty of an artwork, concepts try to account for an aesthetic idea that is

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<sup>339</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 2.

<sup>340</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, First Introduction, V; § 9.

<sup>341</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9.

<sup>342</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9, § 35.

<sup>343</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9.

<sup>344</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 11.

<sup>345</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

itself beyond conceptual encapsulation, which resists conceptual closure.<sup>346</sup> An aesthetic idea, as Kant understands it, is not just any theme that a painter, writer or musician might elaborate, but has a specific significance which links aesthetics to the ground of nature itself: its noumenal, or supersensible substrate, as we will see shortly.<sup>347</sup> This concept of the ‘aesthetic idea’ refers to a particular and contingent formal arrangement of beautiful appearances, in so far as such patterning is manifest in artworks.<sup>348</sup> But only artistry of genius manifests the interpretive inexhaustibility that has been under discussion so far.<sup>349</sup>

I move in the next subsection to address the issue of aesthetic ideas of genius, because an understanding of Kant’s account of such aesthetic ideas, (in their relation to the noumenal or creative ground of phenomena as this itself is linked to the manifestation of true originality in artworks of genius), is key to an understanding of the romantic aesthetic of the sublime, as construed in terms of the intimation of transcendent creativity. This romantic notion of sublimity will loom large in the final chapter, devoted to Coleridge. It is for this reason that I will be addressing, at some length, relevant aspects of Schelling’s *Transcendental Idealism*, in which this romantic aesthetic is given metaphysical foundations, the discussion of which will serve to illumine discussions later on. The particular romantic aesthetic which I have in mind is thus formulated not with reference to Kant’s own notion of sublimity, but in connection with the kind of aesthetic experience which I am going to describe next.

### **(3.2) Aesthetic ideas of genius as ‘supersensibly’ inspired**

We have found that Kant considers phenomenally manifested beauty in terms of the sensible presentation to the imagination of purely gratuitous or contingent, formal patterns of organisation. Beautiful forms are, as it were, in the phenomenal order but not of it, since they cannot be accounted for in causal terms.<sup>350</sup> This is because beautiful form, as literally useless or utterly contingent, cannot be caught in the transcendental net which conditions empirical experience, as we learned in the last chapter. However, as just seen, Kant suggests that rational judgements of beauty are possible on the basis of a purely intelligible, subjective pleasure that is set in motion in and as the appreciation of beautiful form. This pleasure takes the form of an appreciative ‘free-play’ of conceptuality and imagination. Such imaginatively interpretive conceptual reflection can open the mind towards potentially infinite vistas of aesthetic insight. Intellectual pleasure thus constitutes the immediate ground of a judgement of taste or beauty. This means that, while unable to determine the nature of a beautiful presentation objectively, or in terms of finite, empirical truth, such aesthetic judgements can be granted a conditional or

<sup>346</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>347</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 57.

<sup>348</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>349</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 46.

<sup>350</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 11.

‘subjective’ rationality. While the ascription of beauty constitutes no knowledge, the potentially universal validity of such an ascription is rational, as based on the possibility of inter-subjective judgemental agreement.<sup>351</sup>

But to guarantee the rationality of an aesthetic judgement of beauty, Kant insists that there must, in principle, be one right interpretation or explanation of the nature of the beautiful; some non-phenomenal truth which would ground the meaningfulness of the imaginative interpretations which it excites. In this way, the inter-subjective rationality of judgements of beauty is thought to be ultimately grounded in that which is for us intrinsically unknowable: the supersensible substrate of reality.<sup>352</sup> I shall explain further.

Our knowledge is finite by virtue of its sense-based orientation, which renders intellectual intuition of any overarching metaphysical knowledge impossible for us, according to Kant’s position in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. This responsive nature of our finite cognitive faculties means that any rationally objective ground of conceptually indeterminable, phenomenal beauty, can only reside in the ultimate condition of all empirical knowledge, in what Kant describes as the supersensible substrate, or ground of phenomena. This, as literally unknowable according to Kantian tenets, is referred to also as the ‘noumenon’: a concept that serves as no more than a ‘place-marker’ for a trans-empirical creativity about which we can know nothing; a cognitive line drawn at the point where our knowing necessarily gives out.<sup>353</sup> But the fact that we can know nothing of the supersensible substrate of experience does not imply that there is nothing to be known for an infinite, intellectual and creative intuition; for a putative divine intelligence.<sup>354</sup>

So, for Kant, the idea of beauty – as also that of teleological purposiveness, as we shall see later – is merely ‘regulative’;<sup>355</sup> that is to say, such an idea cannot be regarded as giving us actual knowledge of any putative, noumenal Godhead that might be thought to be creativity enabling beautiful and providential appearances within experience. Such purely intellectual ideas serve only to regulate or guide aesthetic and teleological judgements without conveying anything of definite cognitive import concerning the ultimate ground of the sensible appearances in relation to which they are invoked.<sup>356</sup> For Kant, that which is supersensible remains unknowable in principle.

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<sup>351</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 9-12.

<sup>352</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 57.

<sup>353</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B294-A238, B310-A260.

<sup>354</sup> See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, footnote b, p. 339.

<sup>355</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 61.

<sup>356</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 67.

I have been suggesting, in section one, how Schelling and Bergson move beyond Kant's position concerning an intellectual intuition of a creative metaphysical principle. As we will see further in section three, in relation to Schelling's *Transcendental Idealism*, Kant was to be countered over possible intellectual intuition by an appeal to his own transcendental premises. In order to effect this strategy, Schelling turned to the account of aesthetic ideas of genius in the *Critique of Judgement*.<sup>357</sup> Thus on the basis of what we have discovered so far, I now turn a discussion of the beauty that manifests itself in artworks of genius.

An aesthetic idea of genius is a beautiful formal arrangement of striking originality, such that its interpretive possibilities are deemed inexhaustible.<sup>358</sup> Kant defines artworks which make manifest such interpretive inexhaustibility as works of genius, since they disclose a truly original level of creativity.<sup>359</sup> Recalling what has just been said of the supersensible substrate of experience, we have learned that Kant attributes the ultimate source of beautiful appearances to this unknowable ground.<sup>360</sup> Concerning the production of works of genius, Kant suggests that the creative yet noumenal power which unveils itself phenomenally, for example in natural beauty, is also at work, albeit unconsciously, through the activity of the truly original artist.<sup>361</sup> That which confers genius on the artwork, that which leads to the apprehension of an aesthetic idea, is thus held to be the noumenal ground of nature manifesting itself independently of the artist's conscious technical activity (i.e., the application of his musical or painterly technique, for example, to the work at hand).<sup>362</sup> Unconsciously, the artist is inspired by the supersensible, creative power which manifests itself through his work: the same power that grounds our apprehension of the natural order.<sup>363</sup> Thus it is that in works of genius displaying an aesthetic idea in the Kantian sense, it may be said that nature gives the rule to art.<sup>364</sup> It should be noted here that this discussion of a natural power that grounds nature and which discloses itself in art of genius leads us towards the territory of Kant's teleology, which will be dealt with in the next subsection, since it is the same noumenal power which is thought to inspire aesthetic genius that is held by Kant to be at work in the intelligent ordering of natural organisms.<sup>365</sup>

An aesthetic idea of genius, as has been described above, is held to exhibit a purposiveness of truly unique originality, whose interpretive possibilities are inexhaustible. Moreover, in the potentially infinite spiral of hermeneutical activity which the artistic presentation of genius

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<sup>357</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, pp. 81-2.

<sup>358</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9.

<sup>359</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 46- 47.

<sup>360</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 57.

<sup>361</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49; Robert Wicks, *Kant on Judgment*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), p. 132

<sup>362</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>363</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>364</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 46.

<sup>365</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 64.

generates, an aesthetic idea is said to evoke moral consciousness.<sup>366</sup> It is in their connection to the noumenal ground of nature that Kant invokes the possibility of a moral interest supervening on judgements of unique beauty in nature and art. Kant thereby suggests that the appearance of conceptually indeterminable purposiveness in nature and works of genius, in which ‘nature gives the rule to art’,<sup>367</sup> leads one to regard nature as a realm ultimately amenable to our moral goals. The grounding of this claim is to be found in Kant’s moral arguments for the existence of God, as found in the *Critique of Pure Reason*<sup>368</sup> and the *Critique of Practical Reason*.<sup>369</sup> I shall now examine this important connection of the ethical to the aesthetic in more detail.

We have seen it to be Kant’s contention that what is presented by the true artist to sensory awareness intimates an un-manifest-able truth: an infinite, unconditioned principle.<sup>370</sup> The only constitutive or objectively valid unconditional principle, for Kant, is the moral imperative.<sup>371</sup> We have learned that the beauty apparent in original artistry – as the same literally indeterminable beauty that can manifest in nature – must be attributed to the noumenal ground of all phenomena, and thus of all nature, as its productive source. Thus it follows that the productive activity manifest in an artwork of genius, unlike an unoriginal or derivatively ‘academic’ work, is governed by no merely determinate or finite set of aesthetic criteria or rules. It is in this way that nature is said to give the rule to art of genius.<sup>372</sup> Unlike the ‘academic’ painting, for example, which merely follows in the footsteps of genius, as a derivative work assignable to the tradition embodied in a great painter’s school, the interpretative apprehension of the beauty of the truly original artwork is unconditioned, or infinitely resistant to conceptual closure.

In the whole Kantian critical project, such literally infinite significance as is held to be disclosed in natural beauty and art of genius, is shared only by the ethical imperative. Only this Kantian moral imperative is also deemed to be inexhaustible in its significance, through its unconditional right to demand certain causes of action.<sup>373</sup> Thus Kant can arrive at the conclusion that the supersensible source of goodness and natural beauty works through the great artist’s innate genius, unconsciously.<sup>374</sup>

<sup>366</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 59, 60.

<sup>367</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 46. The meaning of the expression ‘nature gives the rule’ in the case of artworks of genius will be explained as we proceed.

<sup>368</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A804/B832-A831/B859.

<sup>369</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, (Amherst: Prometheus, 1996).

<sup>370</sup> The supersensible substrate.

<sup>371</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, § VII.

<sup>372</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 46.

<sup>373</sup> Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, § VII.

<sup>374</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

The concept of a productive role for the imagination, as opposed to the limited role of imaginative schematism has already been met in the context of Kant's epistemology in chapter three. For Kant, the vehicle of true artistic originality is this same, productive imagination, mediating between the supersensible ground of reality and the consciousness of the artist thus inspired.<sup>375</sup> Kant has in effect put forward a critically informed version of the ancient theme of poetic inspiration (always remembering that for Kant, such insights always carry with them a regulative 'as if' status). In section three it will be shown how Schelling builds on Kant's thinking in this regard. The development of such post-Kantian metaphysics cannot be adequately addressed, however, without some understanding of what Kant has to say about conceptually indeterminate, teleological judgements.

### **(3.3) Aspects of Kantian teleology**

An organism, or in Kant's terms, a natural end, displays a purposive form of causality, and its existence cannot be accounted for according to blind necessity, that is, in purely mechanical terms. It must therefore be judged teleologically, as if it were a product of intelligent design.<sup>376</sup> I shall attempt to develop my account of teleological judgement by contrasting it with what is involved in an aesthetic judgement of taste, or pure beauty, which has just been discussed.

Teleological judgement concerns the internal, or integral purposiveness of a natural object: its intrinsic structure. Such a purposive structure is organic: the object cannot be adequately explained in terms of mechanical causation alone, and it must therefore be judged as a natural purpose or end. One cannot conceive such an object as having come about without an intelligent design, and yet one knows that it is not a human artefact. Although, considered in detail, mechanical causality is at work throughout the object, it cannot but be thought that this necessary process of causality is subservient to an inherent and intelligent plan.<sup>377</sup>

Because we know of no causal process in nature that could account for what is to us the sheer contingency of the organic object's intrinsic structure, we cannot make an objective, determining judgement that the organism is a natural end. The particularity of the organism's arrangement, the sheer un-likeness of its complex organised integrity, leads us to *reflect* and search for a concept with which to judge it.<sup>378</sup>

Unlike a determinate judgement, in which empirical knowledge is ascertained, teleological judgements, like aesthetic judgements, are reflective, leaving their objects conceptually

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<sup>375</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 46.

<sup>376</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 67.

<sup>377</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 67.

<sup>378</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 75.



undetermined. No knowledge therefore accrues through teleological judgement, which is nevertheless a fully rational mode of appraisal. We cannot rationally avoid making the judgement that an organism appears intelligently planned, but since we can have no knowledge of the supersensible ground of reality (given the findings of the *Critique of Pure Reason*), we cannot claim actually to know that any super-human intelligence is at work.<sup>379</sup> We know that the organism is not man-made, however, and we also realise that to describe the intelligible structure as purely a work of chance is simply to admit that we have no conceptually objective or determinable explanation of such more-than-mechanical order. Although nothing is actually known through the teleological judgement, at least, and unlike an attribution chance, it remains within the realms of reasonable explanation, as based on a perceived analogy between human intentional agency and organic structure.<sup>380</sup> Organic phenomena suggested to Kant that if such parts of nature can only be judged as if they were rationally planned, then it would be irrational not to assume that the whole of nature is not providentially guided. But again, such a reflective judgement can only have regulative or subjective validity.<sup>381</sup>

Mechanical causality is a method of understanding through straightforward causal analysis, and organisms do certainly submit themselves to this sort of treatment, up to a point. Basic organic constituents can be isolated and the method of their necessary combination will give an understanding of material interactions within the organism. But that such a complex interdependency of organised activity exists at all, that such material interactions sub-serve a formal or intelligible unity of design, is beyond the scope of blind mechanism to explain.<sup>382</sup> Therefore the understanding can never explain organic phenomena fully, which demand holistic as well as analytic interpretation. Conceptually indeterminate judgement must supplement empirically determined knowledge, if such knowledge is not to lose itself in detail, unable to see the meaningful shape of the wood because it cannot stop looking at the individual trees which make it up.<sup>383</sup> For Kant, however, teleological or final causality, while supplying subjectively valid maxims to regulate or guide empirical investigation, cannot supplant mechanical or efficient causality as an objectively more adequate explanatory model.<sup>384</sup> Rather, an organism must be approached in terms of both models, efficient and final.

Kant cites the example of a tree to demonstrate his definition of an organism as cause and effect of itself, both in terms of the species that propagates itself through individual instantiations, and in terms of an individual tree considered in different aspects. The tree persists over time, and

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<sup>379</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 75.

<sup>380</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 67.

<sup>381</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 85.

<sup>382</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 61.

<sup>383</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 68.

<sup>384</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 74.

thus the nourishment taken up from the soil and the sunlight by the tree yesterday is the cause of the existence of the tree today. More subtly, Kant notes how upon grafting one part of a leaf to a different tree, the whole leaf will propagate itself from the part. It draws sustenance parasitically from the alien organism, and as an organ in its own right, has the power to determine itself in terms of a holistic plan: the whole leaf is virtually present in the part.<sup>385</sup> Kant suggests that in organic phenomena, the part exists for the sake of the whole and equally the whole is the condition of possibility for the part. There is a mutuality of dependence between parts and whole, as well as between parts and parts.<sup>386</sup> An organ is a unity in its own right, it exists for the sake of the body which would malfunction without it, and its existence depends on the right functioning of neighbouring organs. The whole is an interlocking system of mutually constitutive parts.<sup>387</sup> This is the difference between a human artefact and a natural end, in fact: while the parts of a pocket-watch are designed to function to the mutual benefit of each other, the parts do not produce each other. In an organism, on the contrary, not only do the parts enable each other's possibility while both conditioned by and conditioning the possibility of the entity's existence of the whole, but an ensemble of parts can also compensate for the failure of one of their number by working together, as if from a centrally integrating plan, both to repair damage, and spontaneously to adapt their mutually inter-related growth to the altered shape of the damaged area.<sup>388</sup>

To say that an organism is both cause and effect of itself is to say all these things, but I believe that the primary feature to note is that there is mutual part-whole dependency in an integrally self-organising system of systems, (since not only the whole but its parts are organs). There is a maximum of self-sufficiency and productivity of the whole combined with a maximum of systematic independence in each part. Teleological explanation is thus holistic, as guided by an intelligible whole in its assessments of parts: it is a 'top-down' causality, as it were, as opposed to the reductive 'bottom-upwards', atomistic model of mechanical explanation.<sup>389</sup>

This very brief outline of selected Kantian aesthetic and teleological themes should suffice to guide us through the following sections of this chapter.

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<sup>385</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 64.

<sup>386</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 64.

<sup>387</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 64.

<sup>388</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 64.

<sup>389</sup> Wicks, *Kant on Judgment*, pp. 200-1.

### (3.4) The metaphysical re-direction of aesthetics and teleology after Kant

Kant's insights into teleology are applied to aesthetics, by Schelling, giving artistic productivity and a metaphysical role.<sup>390</sup> An organism, for Schelling, is like a centrally fusing aesthetic idea, an holistic and intelligible, imaginative expression manifested in a mutual consistency and balance of qualities, as if according to a conceptually undeterminable rule.<sup>391</sup> It will be recalled that according to the Kantian account of artwork of genius, on which romantics such as Schelling build, natural genius only utilises as tools the technical rules of art through which a higher order of holistic causality is made manifest. Going beyond Kant, Schelling holds that in natural beauty and art of true originality it is the productive, teleologically ordering and supersensible ground of nature itself, which is demonstrably at work. And for Schelling, in his *Transcendental Idealism*, it is the work of art itself, rather than any philosophical argument, which demonstrates the organic identity of the metaphysical poles of subjectivity and objectivity; ideality and reality.<sup>392</sup> The ground of nature's own creativity is seen as working, unconsciously, through the artist's conscious, technical accomplishment.<sup>393</sup>

Thus romantic writers such as Schelling give an extremely high role to art in their metaphysics. As Frederick Beiser writes, this is due to the role of the Kantian concept of teleological judgement at work in their *Naturphilosophie*, or metaphysically dynamic explanations of nature.<sup>394</sup> Indeterminate and reflective judgements of aesthetics and teleology serve in such accounts to relativise the role of empirical, causally determined knowledge in such post-Kantian philosophy. The philosophical combination of teleological and romantic insights, after Kant, involves the development of an organic model of aesthetic production, which features prominently in the work of Schelling and Coleridge (as we shall see).

M. H. Abrams discusses this organic model of artistic expression, to suggest that a conception of artistic beauty as the expression of an organically integrating, creative imagination transforms the neo-classical model of beauty that had held sway in the eighteenth century and before. While the traditional or classical model has its roots in Aristotelian *mimesis*<sup>395</sup> – art perceived as imitating or 'holding the mirror up to nature' – the organic model of beauty, as favoured in romantic theory and practice, and which is markedly influenced by Kant's teleology and aesthetics, 'bear[s] a resemblance to the aesthetic qualities that were collected, in the course of the eighteenth century, under the rubric of the sublime'.<sup>396</sup>

<sup>390</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, pp. 84-7.

<sup>391</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 228.

<sup>392</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 217-18.

<sup>393</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 222-3.

<sup>394</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, p. 86.

<sup>395</sup> The concept of artistic sublimity has ancient roots in the thought of Longinus. If Aristotle can be thought as the ancient champion of *mimesis*, then Longinus champions expressivism; see Monk, *The Sublime*.

<sup>396</sup> M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 220.

I noted earlier that the romantic notion of sublimity, or the aesthetic intimation of transcendence with which I am concerned in this thesis, draws on Kant's aesthetic of beauty rather than his treatment of judgements of the sublime. Following Abrams, therefore, I suggest that Kant's concept of beauty, as expressed through his theory of the aesthetic idea,<sup>397</sup> has, ironically, far more in common with the romantic concept of the sublime, than his own stoical and somewhat austere and moralising account of sublimity. Thus I have passed over Kant's theory of sublimity in the last section, and will be treating the romantic conception of beauty as expressive, sublime intimation in chapters six and seven, in connection with my analysis of Coleridge's thought.

#### **(4) Imagining temporal process in Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism***

I shall now show how Schelling's thinking builds on Kant's aesthetic and teleological insights, while to some extent paralleling Bergson's account of an organically creative and processive source of the empirical order.

##### **(4.1) Schelling, imaginative productivity and holistic, teleological explanation**

Frederick Beiser suggests that Schelling sees Kant's account of teleological causality as affording the opportunity to reunite mind and the 'thing in itself' on which it depends. Such a holistic explanatory model would unite the opposites of activity and passivity, reality and ideality, a task beyond the power of mechanically determining causality. The imaginative mediation of sense and understanding would be reconceived as a mutually constitutive and indeed interpenetrative polarity of *related* opposites, subject and object being the conditions of one another.<sup>398</sup> In Schelling's terms, 'Nature should be Mind made visible, Mind the invisible Nature'.<sup>399</sup>

For Schelling, the position Kant elaborates in the *Critique of Pure Reason* cannot adequately account for the mediation of active and passive elements in knowledge. Nevertheless, Schelling suggests that a transcendental deduction of the organic, polar inseparability of such elements, in terms of the mutually related, yet differentiated identity of active and passive poles of experience, as necessary for the possibility of empirical knowledge, would not only turn the idea of organism from a regulative to a constitutive principle, but would also drastically relativise Kant's mechanistically causal model of experience.<sup>400</sup> Quantitative calculation would be seen to be a mere abstraction from an interactive and organic, qualitative wholeness. It is

<sup>397</sup> The aesthetic idea features not only as 'nature giving the rule to art', as the unconscious manifestation of genius through imaginative production, but also in his conception of natural beauty as expressing aesthetic ideas, as if the work of divine art.

<sup>398</sup> Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, pp. 73-87.

<sup>399</sup> Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, p. 42.

<sup>400</sup> Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature*, pp. 8-9, 41-2, Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative*, p. 138.

important to note that Schelling does not return to a pre-Kantian, dogmatic metaphysics. Schelling presents a metaphysic based on an intellectual intuition of the transcendental subject in the very act of self-othering, in order thereby to know itself as self-consciousness.<sup>401</sup> Such intuiting constitutes a practical demand, rather than a theoretical principle: a postulated personal-experiential task, not a theoretically un-provable imposition.<sup>402</sup>

Thus to account for the assumption of an external and independent reality is not to justify such a belief, but to make conscious that which remains unreflected in empirical awareness.<sup>403</sup> Kant's thought of a transcendental subject must become an intuition into the dynamic activity of that metaphysical subjectivity as it rises from unconsciousness to consciousness in the postulated demand of intellectual intuition. The task of philosophy is then to retrace, through participation, the course which the metaphysical subject has unconsciously travelled with consciousness. What is brought up into the light is a process of world constitution. Philosophical intuition comes to know that in surveying the world set empirically before it, it is in fact surveying its own otherness. As Schelling writes *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, 'philosophy is, as such, nothing but an *anamnesis*, a remembrance for the I of what it has done and suffered in its general (its pre-individual) being'.<sup>404</sup> The organic, teleological conditions of possible knowledge reveal that a radical division of ideality from reality is simply an unreflective assumption: what Schelling claims to uncover is their differentiated or relative identity.<sup>405</sup>

For Schelling, at the start of this journey into philosophical self-awareness, a principle of knowledge, an indubitable certainty, must be found. The principle of transcendental philosophy must be an immediate or un-mediated certainty, since all other knowledge is mediated, and if this were the case of its principle, there would be an infinite regress.<sup>406</sup> But this certainty cannot be merely logical. Analytic logic gives identities in mere thought, and therefore logical principles cannot serve as the principle of transcendental philosophy, which must be both synthetic and analytic, as both indubitably real,<sup>407</sup> and also the principle of systematic form.<sup>408</sup> As both formal and real, what is sought is an identity of reality and ideality, something within knowledge that is the condition of possibility of subjectivity and objectivity as they are found in empirical awareness.<sup>409</sup> What in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* is recognised as the ground of transcendental subjectivity is also recognised as *natura naturans*, or the active,

<sup>401</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 27-8.

<sup>402</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 33.

<sup>403</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>404</sup> F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, Andrew Bowie (tr.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 110.

<sup>405</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 9.

<sup>406</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>407</sup> Real as distinct from ideal is intended here.

<sup>408</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>409</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 21-4.

formative source of empirical reality. This concept has a long philosophical pedigree, going back to John Scottus Eriugena,<sup>410</sup> but Schelling is mainly influenced by Spinoza in thinking of nature as primarily a productive intelligence whose product – *natura naturata* – is the empirical world.<sup>411</sup> Unlike empirical reality, or *natura naturata*, the bi-polar, dynamic source of subjectivity and objectivity – *natura naturans* – cannot be explained in mechanical and quantitative terms, that is, its activity cannot be measured and calculated as organic in structure.<sup>412</sup>

The only absolutely certain *knowledge* (as opposed to a mere logical identity in *thought*) is of the existence of the self.<sup>413</sup> Subjectivity *enacts* a knowing affirmation of its own reality. According to Schelling indubitable knowledge is found in the affirmation ‘I am’, or rather in the act of affirming, the act in which self-consciousness is born, a self objectifying act.<sup>414</sup> This knowledge loses its objective certainty, however, when considered in abstraction from the context of the activity of self-affirmation in inner sense.<sup>415</sup> The self – thus understood as a self-productive act – can only be an object for itself, and is nothing apart from its self-propagating activity. As not *originally objective but a self-objectifying act*, such knowledge is not sharable through a universal, or determinate concept, hence it has no public certainty, and therefore does not belong to theoretical philosophy. Self-certainty is thus held to be a practical or moral (in the sense, perhaps, of ‘existential’) certainty, and not a theoretical conceptual determination.<sup>416</sup>

So the principle of knowledge – as self-insight, or insight into self-activity as the originating yet continuous birthing of the self, its bringing of itself into the light of knowledge – is thus rational, but not theoretical. This principle is what has been meant with reference to the term ‘practical postulate’, a term that we have come across in section one in relation to the discussion of philosophical intuition. Schelling’s philosophy is founded on such a practical knowing, on intellectual intuition. Such non-sensory intuiting is held to be a knowing which has no meaning in abstraction from the act of self-certainty.<sup>417</sup> Such a concept of self-awareness must also be distinguished from empirical self-awareness, since, as insight into the creative ground of the empirical, it manifests as intrinsically limitless activity.<sup>418</sup> Such transcendental self-certainty is conceptually indeterminable in the sense that its own coming to be is its coming to be known. Selfhood is thus not a being, something finite and determinable,<sup>419</sup> but an unending becoming,

<sup>410</sup> See John Scottus Eriugena, *Periphyseon*, (Montreal: Les Editions Bellarmin, 1987).

<sup>411</sup> See Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, Andrew Boyle (tr.) (London: J. M. Dent, 1993).

<sup>412</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 6, 12, 17.

<sup>413</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 24-6.

<sup>414</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 24-9.

<sup>415</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 29.

<sup>416</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 28, 31.

<sup>417</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 15-31.

<sup>418</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 25.

<sup>419</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 32.

and the act of becoming is indistinguishable from its own philosophically intuited self-awareness: the ‘being’ of the transcendental self is its own knowing.<sup>420</sup> Such a non-conceptual, non-sensible act of knowledge which *enacts*, in bringing to light, the existence of what it knows is an intellectual intuition.<sup>421</sup>

Schelling points out that this act of self-objectification is present, albeit unconsciously, in all conscious knowledge. It is raised to consciousness in philosophical intuition.<sup>422</sup> As Kant demonstrated, (as we have seen), transcendental subjectivity, or self-consciousness, must be able to accompany all possible knowledge. But Kant’s transcendental subjectivity cannot function as a constitutive principle of knowledge, as he only suggests that the thought ‘I think’ must be able to accompany all possible knowledge. Schelling suggests that such a static thought of self is derivative from a dynamic and intuitable self-activity, a self-constitutive and thus foundational act of knowing that can only be enacted in inner sense, as an act of philosophical intuition.<sup>423</sup>

Philosophical, like geometrical intuition is of timeless, or eternal truth.<sup>424</sup> ‘Selfing’, as *timeless* activity,<sup>425</sup> therefore must actively *constitute* inner sense, and thus *create time*, in the course of its own self-objectification. Inner sense dynamically *becomes*, just as the transcendental self’s own objectifying activity constitutes the possibility of external reality in Kantian outer sense, or space.<sup>426</sup> In some ways like Bergson, therefore, it could be argued that Schelling introduces a *genuine* becoming a creation of time or temporal-ising that grounds Kant’s derivative and ‘spatialised’ account of time as adapted to the condition of empirical knowledge. Ideality and reality are thus linked as a differentiated identity, or self-othering: phenomenal reality is the primordial subject’s own otherness.<sup>427</sup> As a non-theoretical foundation for transcendental philosophy, the dynamic act of self-intuition of the eternal birthing of the self, is simultaneously the philosopher’s own self-intuiting and that which is intuited. Therefore the ‘organ of philosophy’, or mode of philosophical construction which Schelling is to utilise must itself be a sustaining of opposites in tension.<sup>428</sup> Here we are reminded somewhat of the Kierkegaardian model of imagination, as addressed in chapter two.

<sup>420</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 27.

<sup>421</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 27.

<sup>422</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 25.

<sup>423</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 26.

<sup>424</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>425</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 32.

<sup>426</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 98.

<sup>427</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 35-6.

<sup>428</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 9.

Schelling sees that, as communicating indeterminate or ‘non-objective’<sup>429</sup> knowledge, the conceptual translation of intellectual intuition that is needed for the communication of his own philosophy must be mediated by aesthetically indeterminate judgement, which he says is born of the productive imagination’s ‘wavering’ between the active and passive poles of self-objectivising activity, in which the philosopher participates intuitively.<sup>430</sup>

Schelling draws on Kantian insights into organic structure to advance his position. As a dynamism that institutes its own existence, selfhood, in its self-objectifying activity, is cause and effect of its own polar structure.<sup>431</sup> This is to say that in becoming objective, transcendental subjective activity enacts its own passivity.<sup>432</sup> I shall now try to consolidate what has been learned in this section so far.

Unconscious imaginative productivity, as unlimited and spontaneous self-creation, is an enabler of its own otherness.<sup>433</sup> As a movement of self-determination, primordial subjectivity is an imaginatively productive unity, a sustaining in tension of related opposites.<sup>434</sup> Like Heraclitus’s Logos<sup>435</sup>, Schelling’s first principle is a productive, moving unity of opposites: it is both real and ideal.<sup>436</sup> It is an implicitly intelligent, or unconscious activity growing towards its own self-consciousness. Thus it is that imagination not only mediates between activity and passivity, between intuition and that which is intuited, in philosophical construction. Imagination’s role is not solely epistemological, in this way. Rather, such imaginatively indeterminate, philosophical insight is *itself* ontologically productive, or more accurately, the intuiting philosopher participates in imagination’s ontological productivity.<sup>437</sup> The intuitive activity of philosophical imagination is itself the raising to consciousness of an originally unconscious productivity, through which eternal subjectivity comes to exist *as* temporal process.<sup>438</sup> Imaginative productivity is, paradoxically, not only a medium of epistemic insight into the integral relatedness of subjectivity and objectivity, but also the ontologically constitutive condition of possible temporal process, or unfolding self-objectification.

The imagination’s dynamic, productive activity thus enables the temporal existence of active and passive, or subjective and objective poles of being.<sup>439</sup> We shall come to see as this thesis progresses that this theme of productive imagination will be developed by Coleridge, as we

<sup>429</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 26.

<sup>430</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 11-14, 176.

<sup>431</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 27.

<sup>432</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 41.

<sup>433</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 27.

<sup>434</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 11-14, 176.

<sup>435</sup> See *Early Greek Philosophy*, Jonathan Barnes (tr.) (London: Penguin, 1987), pp. 114-17.

<sup>436</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 41.

<sup>437</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 27.

<sup>438</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 27, 32.

<sup>439</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 176.



have seen it already to be radically challenged by Kierkegaard, in his focus on the un-resolvability of subjectivity and objectivity, the two poles which must, for him, be held in a creative tension by the imagination.

#### **(4.2) Schelling and the endlessness of metaphysical revelation through art**

We have found that both Schelling's post-Kantian metaphysics and Bergson's account of organic, ontological process proceed by taking into account Kant's insights into the temporal situation of the thinker, to offer an ontological vista that is only accessible on the basis of a shared commitment in interpretation between the reader and the philosopher. This commitment takes divergent forms in various styles of thought, but I would suggest that such apparently diverse strategies as Schelling's grounding intuitive demand or practical postulate, and Kierkegaard's appeal to authentic selfhood through indirect communication share this essentially post-Kantian turn. Schelling's transcendental philosophy, we have found, is grounded not in theoretical cognition, but in an imaginative vision which is nevertheless thoroughly thought through with an exacting use of logical argument. To be convinced of Schelling's insights, his readers must intuit along with him, participating in the philosophical self-activity which 'sustains, as it were, the speculative flight', as Schelling himself puts it.<sup>440</sup> An original subjectivity, an infinite, unconscious and primordial ground of conscious and free activity is thereby raised to the level of philosophical consciousness in the act of non-objective knowledge. This self-intuition is, as a conscious participation in grounding movement, the unconscious ground's own illumination.<sup>441</sup> Unconscious intelligence thus grounds reality and ideality; the phenomenal world, in polarity with our empirical knowledge of it, is the result of a journey that original and unconscious subjectivity has taken in order to arrive at self-consciousness.<sup>442</sup>

But Schelling insists that, to be complete, transcendental philosophy has to exhibit the identity of unconscious and conscious productivity outwardly, in the 'real' pole of the real-ideal polarity, and so not merely within the participating consciousness of the philosopher. Infinite, unconscious productivity must be seen to emerge from a finite product of consciousness in the 'external' order.<sup>443</sup> Schelling builds on Kant's account of genius as the source of artistic beauty in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. We have seen above that for Kant, nature itself gives the strictly ineffable and indeterminate rule to truly original art as creatively manifest in an aesthetic idea. The artist's planning and technique is thus considered a merely instrumental cause. Schelling goes further, and considers truly original art to be the true fulfilment of

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<sup>440</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 28.

<sup>441</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>442</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 232.

<sup>443</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 217-18.

philosophy, as the objective revelation of the primordially creative unity of subjectivity and objectivity. An infinite, divine source of mind and matter inspires the artist's labours, driving him on with a creativity not his own, and which can never be fully understood.<sup>444</sup>

Thus Schelling builds firmly on Kant's aesthetic account, as previously addressed in section two: aesthetic ideas, shining through the artist's work, reveal an infinite meaningfulness that provokes imaginative interpretation, but which can never be conceptually contained. Schelling's transcendental philosophy follows the underground dynamism of *natura naturans*<sup>445</sup> of which Kant's empirical phenomena are the mechanical deposits, like embankments heaped up by a river. Philosophy re-traces the unconscious flow and brings it to light.<sup>446</sup> But transcendental subjectivity, or from a converse perspective, *natura naturans*, only flowers in the open through imaginatively mediated works of artistic beauty.<sup>447</sup> Unconscious metaphysical productivity is the creative source of genuine 'poesis', or (literally) original artistic expression.<sup>448</sup> A concept of expressive beauty is thus developed by Schelling that is very different from the more traditional, or 'classical' aesthetic of Aristotelian mimesis.<sup>449</sup> Schelling represents a movement among romantic writers and artists to re-conceive beauty in terms of the sublime intimation of conceptually uncontainable transcendence, drawing on Kant's insights into self-developing organic process. In their work, such artists and thinkers aim to evoke an infinite yearning, an impossibility of finding interpretive and existential closure, which yet feels like a return, or homecoming; a yearning for an infinitely distant home imbued with a sense of 'déjà vu', a quality of recollection or *anamnesis*.<sup>450</sup> I shall be arguing that such a feeling of paradoxically

<sup>444</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 215-16, 218, 222-23.

<sup>445</sup> Schelling, F.W.J., *The Philosophy of Art*, Douglas W. Stott (ed., trans. & intro.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. xli.

<sup>446</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 232.

<sup>447</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 218.

<sup>448</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 228.

<sup>449</sup> See Aristotle, *Poetics*, in D. A. Russell & Michael Winterbottom (ed.), *Classical Literary Criticism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 51.

<sup>450</sup> Perhaps Wordsworth meant something of the sort by his Ode, *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood* (William Wordsworth, *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994) pp. 701-4):

'Not in entire forgetfulness,

And not in utter nakedness,

But trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God, who is our home.'

And yet:

'...The moon doth with delight

Look round her when the heavens are bare;

Waters on a starry night

Are beautiful and fair;

The sunshine is a glorious birth;

And yet I know, where'er I go,

That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.'

The true significance only comes out by combining both aspects. Perhaps the poet simply re-interprets in aesthetic terms the Pauline contention that salvation is both already and not yet. The question is whether writers such as Wordsworth, who are culturally steeped in Christian values, put Christian dogmatic beliefs, as only impersonally considered, in the form of a parable of participation in living nature, as an apologetic strategy, as Abrams contends in his *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: Norton, 1973). In this case, any theological significance will not derive from their art *as* art, and it must be distinguished from all other art as *Christian* art. But I would like to consider whether such deep aesthetic experience might genuinely prefigure the Christian revelation in its own right, nature's creation already being an act of divine grace. I shall be addressing such theological problems later in this work. J. Robert Barth's work will be of service here.

perfect, and yet perfectly unattainable belonging may have some genuine theological significance, as a prefiguration or perhaps premonition of the possibility of genuine redeemed selfhood, a freedom which is possible granted through divine grace.

##### **(5) Bergsonian duration or romantic teleology?**

In the final section of this chapter, I am returning to the thought of Bergson in light of what has been learned about creative process through Schelling's appropriation of Kant's teleological and aesthetic thinking.

##### **(5.1) Bergsonian and post-Kantian concepts of process compared**

It has been shown above that Bergson criticises Kant's 'spatialised' conception of time.<sup>451</sup> We can now see that Bergson's concept of duration shares notable structural similarities with Schelling's re-conception of the Kantian 'thing-in-itself' as a transcendental source of subjectivity and objectivity.

We have found Bergson's concept of philosophical intuition, like Schelling's, reveals the need of an imaginative mediation of metaphysical insight into creative process. After Kant's analysis of indeterminate judgements of aesthetic and organic forms, metaphysics is no longer a dogmatic exercise in spurious conceptual objectivity. Ontological insight becomes a matter of imaginative intuition into the universal life and development which is common to subjectivity and the objective world alike. In Bergson, as in Schelling, aesthetic discrimination and subjective participation in nature's organic movement are the medium and source of such philosophical intuition. But a key difference between process as conceived by Bergson on the one hand and in its romantic, teleological form on the other will be shown to have important implications for the course of my thesis.

We are now in a position to see that the postulate of a primordially creative, yet unconscious duration relates to empirical reality, for Bergson, as the concept of *natura naturans* relates to *natura naturata*, for Schelling. For Bergson, empirical reality only ever approximates to the geometric perfection mapped out for it by the understanding. But that we do in fact succeed in our calculations indicates that matter and understanding are conformed to one another, as sharing the same spatialising trajectory.<sup>452</sup> Bergson regards materiality as having evolved in polar or organic complementarity with ideality, and the course of their evolution is the track of

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<sup>451</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 214-18.

<sup>452</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 210.

the descent or deflation of an ontologically prior dynamic intensity.<sup>453</sup> The time that we habitually work with is a scale of measurement: very useful for practice, as itself a perfection of what remains only a tendency of the world around us to approximate to pure spatiality.<sup>454</sup>

As we learned in section one, Bergson holds that we can transcend the Kantian limits of the understanding by going to the original root of Kant's spatialised conception of time with an intuition into concrete becoming as the fruitful source of our own, actuality, as of that of the empirical world around us. Bergson calls such intuition 'supra-', or 'ultra-intellectual', perhaps to distance himself from idealist conceptions of intellectual intuition.<sup>455</sup> But this Bergsonian intuition does utilise the intelligence or understanding in the process of transcending its limitations. The understanding is turned around in Bergsonian intuition of the ground of empirical selfhood.<sup>456</sup> While the understanding is adapted to further the external aims of life, it can, nevertheless, can be turned around, as it were, or trained participatively to endure its own becoming, like a beacon illumining unconscious depths within.<sup>457</sup>

However Bergson does differ importantly from his romantic predecessors in denying the metaphysical originality not only of mechanical, but of final or teleological causality, such as we have seen Schelling's (and, earlier on, Hegel's) accounts to rely upon.<sup>458</sup> This is the key difference between Bergsonian and idealist concepts of process to which I have referred in the introduction. By following Bergson's criticism of the spatialised concept of time on which he finds teleological thinking to depend, we will have discovered a criterion by which to test and recognise a truly open-ended – in the sense of conceptually incalculable – account of the aesthetically intimate encounter with transcendence. This means, that by following this Bergsonian criterion, we shall be guided towards the kind of aesthetic account that can be shown to accord with a Kierkegaardian or epistemologically paradoxical concept of revelation.

## **(5.2) Bergson's critique of Kantian teleology**

Bergson builds on Kant's recognition in the *Critique of the Power of Judgement* that we derive our concept of final causes from human productive activity.<sup>459</sup> Human making can only ever be a regulative model for the appearance of intelligent purposes in nature, for Kant: we can only ever think of organisms *as if* they were designed intentionally, as we saw above. Bergson wants to transcend Kant's regulative restrictions so as fully to recognise a universal source of value

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<sup>453</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 214-15.

<sup>454</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 214-218.

<sup>455</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 380-1.

<sup>456</sup> Later we will discover that Coleridge also sees fancy and understanding as working in the service of the imaginative creation of poetic, rational symbols, the embodiment of Platonic ideas of reason conceived as dynamic universals.

<sup>457</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 380-1.

<sup>458</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 41-2.

<sup>459</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 48-50.

and freedom, while distancing himself from the distortions which he believes would arise from a traditional teleological solution.<sup>460</sup> Unlike the traditional model of final causality, Bergson believes his thesis of creative duration allows room for genuine novelty to arise in the universe.<sup>461</sup>

Creation is intrinsically unpredictable, for Bergson, whereas explanation in terms of final causes always presupposes a goal to be arrived at through premeditated planning.<sup>462</sup> Teleological planning has evolved in human beings as a requirement for successful adaptation to the obstacles inherent in our environment. We calculate our course through life by utilising what we find lying around us arbitrarily as means for projected ends. Teleological causality thus selectively adapts pre-existent matter to suit our plans, and is not ontologically creative.<sup>463</sup>

The ability to *project* plans implies that we are working practically and habitually with a spatialised conception of time, one that sees time as laid out all at once, like a cloth over a table. Just as the tablecloth is woven to a uniform pattern from one material, such that one end is homogeneously continuous with the other, so our spatialised conception of time is a ‘schema’ or instrument, abstracted from the reality of an essentially heterogeneous and concrete productive flow.<sup>464</sup> The next moment can never be a repetition of its predecessor, as intrinsically modified by it.<sup>465</sup> What is quantitatively repeatable in calculative abstraction is intrinsically an infinitely diversifying growth of qualitative uniqueness.<sup>466</sup>

Bergson, like the romantics before him, seems to have an affinity with the thought of Heraclitus, who famously held that one cannot step into the same, flowing river twice.<sup>467</sup> Insight into qualitative uniqueness that cannot be contained in the conceptual net of mechanistic Enlightenment thought is claimed by Bergson and the romantics alike, so I finish this chapter on by recalling what we have learned of Bergson’s key innovation in this regard. For Bergson, no point of time is a repetition of its predecessor, and it will be modified by what has gone before, *as well as modifying it*.<sup>468</sup> But is this not exactly what Kant’s analysis of organisms seen as final causes, traditionally conceived, shows? Kant focuses on a mutually constitutive and thus creative interdependency of whole and parts.<sup>469</sup> However, I suggest that Bergson deepens Kant’s analysis of an organism as productive of itself *over time*. For Bergson, the organically

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<sup>460</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 46-8.

<sup>461</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 48.

<sup>462</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 47.

<sup>463</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 46-50.

<sup>464</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>465</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>466</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 4-6.

<sup>467</sup> See Barnes, *Early Greek Philosophy*, p. 116.

<sup>468</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 26. See note 323.

<sup>469</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 64.

creative flow of Kant is more radically transformative: *what existed yesterday takes on a new complexion in the light of a today which it in turn has uniquely modified.*<sup>470</sup>

It is true that in the romantic and idealist model of the ‘self-othering’ odyssey of Spirit,<sup>471</sup> (of which perhaps the most famous instance is Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*),<sup>472</sup> what is revealed at the culmination of the system, transforms the complexion of the passage that has been taken. But *this transformation was pre-supposed* by the philosopher from the beginning, to emerge on cue as the teleological denouement of an artfully planned narrative plot.<sup>473</sup> The ultimate goal is always at the disposal of the thinker, as he constructs the teleological artefact that is the philosophical system. The ultimate destiny is in his pocket, as it were. Such is not the stuff of truly divine revelation, as that which we could never have given ourselves as we learned from Kierkegaard. Nevertheless, I believe this stricture does not apply to the truly open-ended nature of romantic aesthetic practice, as distinct from any philosophical theorising upon such creative activity.

It will emerge in chapter seven that Bergson’s more radical, as non-teleological, concept of durational process serves as a criterion to distinguish between the systematic philosophy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and his more informal aesthetic and religious reflections. The latter will be found to comprise an aesthetic account that is conformable to Kierkegaard’s paradoxical concept of Christian revelation. This is because Coleridge will be shown to refrain from explaining his essentially processive ethico-aesthetic experience in overarching or teleological terms, when not conforming his insights to the demands of idealist systematic explanation. There is a real sense in which the intimative process of through which Coleridge’s aesthetic experience is mediated bears a genuinely incalculable, or literally unforeseeable quality. In Bergson’s terms, Coleridge’s religiously oriented aesthetic thinking reflects his experience of genuinely unpredictable qualitative transition.

As we learned in chapters one and two, the scandal of particularity, the inextricable paradox of the Christian revelation of salvation,<sup>474</sup> as Kierkegaard understands it, is precisely what one could not always already have thought possible. It is on the basis of this *theological* criterion that I aim to show, in chapter seven, the genuine possibility of an artistic-experiential adumbration of a revelation only made fully actual in Christ, by grace, as beyond the transcendental possibilities of the finite human understanding. This chapter, through a critical

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<sup>470</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 26. See note 323.

<sup>471</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, p. 232.

<sup>472</sup> See chapter 1 section 3.1.

<sup>473</sup> See Bergson on teleology, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 46-50.

<sup>474</sup> As encapsulated in the *homoousion* formulation of the Council of Chalcedon; see *Documents of the Christian Church*, p. 56.

comparison of the durational thought of Bergson with the teleological post-Kantianism of Schelling, has provided us with a *philosophical* criterion by which to judge the theological appropriateness of aesthetic accounts, from a Kierkegaardian theological perspective.





## V

### Duration as Imagination: the Open Future

#### Introduction

Building on the first four chapters, I will be suggesting now that Kantian aesthetic tenets from the *Critique of Judgement* can helpfully elucidate Bergson's claim for an intellectual intuition of dynamic temporality. Kant does not analyse in precise terms what he means by the 'free play' of imagination and conceptuality involved in the judgement of taste. He simply utilises a musical metaphor to describe an intellectual interaction: conceptuality acts in 'harmony'<sup>475</sup> with the imagination's free activity. But what is the precise nature of such free imaginative activity? What is its bearing on durational creativity, and thus on Kant's own conception of time? My twofold contention in this chapter can be summarised as follows.

In section two, we return to the issue of Kant's productive imagination to examine its relation to Bergson's account of metaphysically productive time. This discussion will importantly inform and advance the argument of section three. In sections three, I shall argue that Bergson's concept of metaphysical intuition,<sup>476</sup> as it was left in the last chapter, stands in need of rational clarification. Durational intuition can, I suggest, best be understood in terms of Kant's conception of aesthetic purposiveness without purpose, or end,<sup>477</sup> as discerned in the conceptually reflective, and thus non-determining, judgement of taste (as discussed in chapter four). I suggest that Kant's free play of the imagination is the instrument of Bergson's intuition into duration, and, moreover, is of the same dynamic nature as the fundamental temporality in which it participates, and from which Kant's own mathematicised or spatialised time is an abstraction. This is to say that the creativity of durational process is identifiable with the productive imagination.

The relevance of discussions in this chapter will bear fruit in chapter seven. By accounting for dynamic, creative process in terms of Kantian productive imagination and aesthetic reflection, rather than in teleological terms, an understanding of the intimation of transcendence through art may be discovered that is acceptable from the viewpoint of Kierkegaardian paradoxical revelation. In chapter seven, and in relation to Coleridgean aesthetic thought, I shall be arguing that just the kind of 'Bergsonian' aesthetically suggestive reflection that will be analysed in this

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<sup>475</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 9, p. 103.

<sup>476</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 187.

<sup>477</sup> Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, § 11, p. 106.

chapter is also characteristic of an ethically receptive, conceptually indeterminate apprehension of transcendent creativity, as mediated through art and natural beauty.

So, in light of findings from this chapter, in the final chapter I will be able to present an account characterising artistic imaginative activity in terms of ethical receptivity. Thus I will be advancing an aesthetic that is compatible with Kierkegaardian theological requirements, as laid down in my first two chapters. In this way, I will achieve the goal of my thesis: to present an account of poetic activity that can harmonise Kierkegaard's aesthetically indirect communicative strategy with the understanding of Christian faith which it subserves.

### **(1) Kant and Bergson: understanding the issues**

We have seen that while Kant, in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, regards experience as structured according to unchangingly general and determinate categories, Bergson's thinking discerns a creative flow of unique and unforeseeable qualitative distinctions. Thus it would be fair to suggest that while Kant views possible objective knowledge in terms of conceptually determinate judgement, Bergson – alive to the role of imagination in interpreting mechanically irreducible particularity – sees the possibility of another kind of philosophical knowledge only expressible in terms of conceptually reflective judgement. We saw in the last chapter that such reflective judgement is characteristic of Kant's aesthetic or subjectively rational judgements of taste. Thus I have suggested above that Bergson's thought might be profitably examined in Kantian aesthetic terms. To this end we will now need to look more closely at Bergson's concept of philosophical intuition. What exactly is such intuition? This is left very unclear by Bergson, and presents considerable logical difficulties, which might find their resolution in a Kantian, aesthetic understanding of his philosophical intuition.

In chapter four, we found that metaphysical intuition, as Bergson understands it, is a reversal of the natural tendency or direction of the human understanding. As a biological adaptation, the understanding is oriented towards activity in the external world.<sup>478</sup> Understanding is a highly developed form of consciousness which enables a degree of choice among options. The understanding is thus a means of promoting and achieving the practical aims of life; a means of negotiating and instrumentalising the resources of the environment for the achievement of positive goals and for the avoidance of danger.<sup>479</sup> According to Bergson, the philosopher can train this faculty to reflect on the nature of his own existence, the fluid continuity of growing

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<sup>478</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 146, 202, 209-10.

<sup>479</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 146.

life, the qualitative growth of ‘mind energy’,<sup>480</sup> in which the individual participates as a dynamic cosmic principle.

But it must be admitted that the nature of such intuition is obscure. Bergson argues that an inability to define intuition is due to its nature, as resistant to conceptual determination.<sup>481</sup> The flow of life is durational; it cannot be encapsulated in the conceptuality of an understanding that is conditioned by the demands of the spatial terrain which it must navigate.<sup>482</sup> The understanding distinguishes and labels the seamless flow of a durational time, a flow which it necessarily divides into abstract or ‘spatialised’ moments.<sup>483</sup> Such artificial divisions, as we saw in the last chapter, cannot be re-composed to give direct insight into the continuity of which they are a practical analysis.<sup>484</sup> Again, we saw that in demanding that the reader must himself perform an act of intuition in order to understand the philosopher, Bergson is following in the footsteps of his early nineteenth century romantic forebears. We saw that Schelling’s *Transcendental Idealism* is similarly conditioned by a ‘practical postulate’, or regulative stipulation, that the reader can only gain insight by personally participating in the metaphysical intuition of the philosopher, accompanying him on his path, as it were.

Bergson responds to critical suggestions that his philosophical intuition amounts to no more than a feeling or hunch by arguing that ‘intuition is reflection’,<sup>485</sup> which can only be asymptotically approximated through discursive concepts. Nevertheless, as Frederick Copleston points out, ‘this sounds like a contradiction in terms’.<sup>486</sup> Philosophical intuition, according to Bergson, ‘signifies first of all consciousness, but immediate consciousness, a vision which is scarcely distinguishable from the object seen, a knowledge which is contact, and even coincidence’.<sup>487</sup> Such immediacy would seem to be incompatible with a process of reflection.

I suggest that what we have learned about aesthetic imaginative activity from Kant may help to shed light on Bergson’s elusive philosophical intuition. We have seen, in chapter three, that Bergson’s intuition is said to be mediated by an ‘image’, which he says is itself the unfolding of a ‘schematic idea, whose elements interpenetrate’.<sup>488</sup> The intuited scheme or schema, a simple integrity grasped ‘as a musician grasps a chord’, holds in ‘reciprocal implication’ what the

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<sup>480</sup> Henri Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, H. Wildon Carr (tr.) (London: Macmillan & Co., 1921), pp. v - viii.

<sup>481</sup> Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 109.

<sup>482</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 209-10, 214-15.

<sup>483</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 209-10.

<sup>484</sup> Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 285.

<sup>485</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 109.

<sup>486</sup> Frederick Copleston, *19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century French Philosophy*, in *A History of Philosophy* 11 vols. (London: Continuum, 2003), vol. IX, p. 181.

<sup>487</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 32.

<sup>488</sup> Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, pp. 162, 166.

image will ‘evolve into parts’, giving rise to imagistic or aesthetically suggestive language.<sup>489</sup> Concepts can never contain the philosophical content of the intuition, but may indeterminately evoke it, enabling sympathetic participation on the part of the reader.<sup>490</sup>

We have seen that Kant’s aesthetic ideas also combine unity in variety, perceived as an indefinitely expanding halo of significance, as the manifestation of a dynamic source of artistic productivity.<sup>491</sup> Could Bergson’s philosophical intuition therefore be a form of aesthetically creative insight? If such were the case, then Bergson’s claim that ‘intuition is reflection’<sup>492</sup> could be interpreted in terms of the process of interaction between imagination and indeterminate conceptuality that Kant ascribes to artistic aesthetic judgement.

Moreover, we shall see that Bergson’s descriptions of the organic nature of durational experience strongly echo the nature of Kant’s productive imagination in its fundamental role in conditioning possible experience, as introduced in chapter three. We must shortly readdress this key aspect of Kantian epistemology in more depth, in order to draw attention to the intrinsically organic structure of the productive or transcendental imagination, as suggestive of lines of advance towards a solution to the problem of the logical status of Bergsonian philosophical intuition. In re-addressing Kant’s transcendental deduction from the perspective of productive imagination as an organically conceived, epistemological structure, we will discover that Kant’s transcendental imagination interacts with conceptual categories in terms of mutual grounding or causality.

So, in order fully to understand the thinking in terms of which we can discern the coherence of Bergson’s necessarily conceptual account of intrinsically non-conceptual philosophical intuition, we need to contextualise it; we will need to return to the complex issue of the Kantian imagination. In thus meditating on aspects of Bergsonian and Kantian thought, I will be forwarding the aim of the thesis, since the insights thus gained into imaginatively productive temporality will cast significant light on the problem of artistic creativity and its relation to faith and freedom, as Kierkegaard understands it, as we re-focus upon these issues in chapter seven. Thus we will have made progress in addressing the central problem of this thesis: the reconciliation of key practical and theoretical aspects of Kierkegaard’s approach to aesthetics. In section two I will analyse Kantian productive imagination as an organic structure. In section three I will address Bergsonian intuition in terms of Kantian aesthetic ideas.

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<sup>489</sup> Bergson, *Mind-Energy*, p. 162.

<sup>490</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 187.

<sup>491</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>492</sup> Henri Bergson, *La Pensée et le Mouvant*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1938), p. 95.

## (2) Kant's polar imagination as a theoretical model for Bergson's philosophical intuition

In the course of our earlier investigation of Kantian productive imagination, in chapter three, we confronted the issue of the imagination's vital role in construing the sensible manifold, thereby conditioning the very possibility of any subsequent conceptual interpretation, transcendental or empirical. But we must now go over this ground again in more depth, in order to show, in light of chapter four, what will emerge as the intrinsically *organic* structure of Kant's transcendental, or productive imagination.

It shall be argued that insight into the organic nature of Kantian imagination sheds light on the problem which confront us concerning the logical coherence of Bergson's claims for a non-conceptual philosophical intuition. With Kantian imagination, we uncover a framework that can account for the *apparent* incoherence of Bergson's claim for an imaginative, pre-conceptual intuition of a creative process, which yet can only be communicated in conceptual terms. Kant's account of the deduction of the categories presents the related problem of a claim for imaginative, pre-conceptual construal of the sensible manifold – which yet, and again, can only be accounted for conceptually. The organic structure of the answer which I shall offer to this Kantian issue suggests a homologous solution to the similar problem arising in an acute form in relation to the coherence of Bergson's account of ontologically creative, dynamic process, before its flow is cut up into concepts by the calculative understanding.

Just as is the case concerning a distinction that must be made, in relation to Kant, between a pre-conceptual 'imaginative construal' and 'conceptual interpretation' proper,<sup>493</sup> so also Bergson's claim for an intrinsically non-conceptual intuition will remain purely nominal, a mere *flatus vocis*, unless there is some account – again, necessarily conceptual – to justify non-conceptual discernment, and in so doing, prove capable of justifying itself as a conceptual account of the intrinsically *un*-conceptual nature of imagination, as it opens up a world to us. I suggest that attention to the solution of this explanatory dilemma which shall be offered in the case of Kant can help unravel the same problem in regard to Bergsonian intuition. The solution at which I will arrive, regarding Kant, can be summarised preliminarily by saying that the Kantian productive imagination acts as a *grounded ground*. By this I mean that while enabling the application of conceptual conditions of experience, transcendental imaginative activity, paradoxically, is also directed by those same conceptual forms. Kant's productive imagination will thus be shown to display an organic structure, as addressed in the last chapter.

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<sup>493</sup> See chapter 3 section 3.2.

As organically structured, it will be argued, Kantian imaginative construal cannot itself be disambiguated in terms of any straightforward causal account, because of the conceptually paradoxical or irreducible nature of organic structure, as analysed in chapter four. By showing that Bergson's intuition is also such an imaginative productivity, we will be able to see that his intuition is indeed intelligible or accountable, but in organic terms, and thus as causally irreducible. It will be argued, later in this chapter, and in chapters to come, that the same kind of organically active-receptive, or ethico-aesthetic intrinsic, imaginative structure as is found in Kant's account of productive imagination, must also be characteristic of any aesthetic of art and nature which may be reconcilable with Kierkegaardian paradoxical theology. Such an active-receptive structure has already been shown to characterise Kierkegaard's 'imagination of inwardness', in chapter two. Bergson has already provided us with a related criterion for such an organic aesthetic of transcendence, through his account of genuinely un-foreseeable – as conceptually paradoxical – creative process, as we saw in the last chapter. It is to elucidate Bergson's conceptually paradoxical philosophical intuition of such process that we now turn, once more, to Kant's account of transcendental imagination.

### **(2.1) The organic nature of imagination: a causally ambiguous productive process**

We learned in chapter three that Kant distinguishes a transcendently productive imaginative capacity – as an epistemological condition of possible experience – from empirical imagination. By virtue of its creative, transcendental role, the productive imagination is the same power that works unconsciously to guide aesthetic production in works of genius, as discussed in chapter four. Kant identifies the productive imagination, epistemologically, as responsible for all synthetic activity, cognitive and aesthetic: 'synthesis in general is...the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious'.<sup>494</sup> I will discuss the aesthetic aspect of the productive imagination later. The point to be grasped here is that Kant distinguishes between empirical image-production and an interpretive, synthetic activity assigned to the productive imagination, in rendering any and all experience possible.<sup>495</sup> Productive, or transcendental imagination gives a temporal construal to the synopsis of the manifold – sense data – in temporal inner sense. Imagination thus enables an awareness, or formal intuition of the manifold *as* temporally ordered.<sup>496</sup> It is the productive imagination that occupies Kant's thought, in its epistemological and aesthetic bearings, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*.

<sup>494</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A78.

<sup>495</sup> See Young, 'Kant's View of Imagination', pp. 140-164.

<sup>496</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A99-A102; A117-A118.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Paton suggests that the crucial imaginative synthetic activity in the transcendental deduction is what Kant describes as a combination in accordance with affinity, which is analysed as involving both spatial and temporal aspects of connection.<sup>497</sup> Transcendental combination through affinity thematises sensibility in spatio-temporal terms, establishing the pattern to be followed by all empirical imaginative activity, since such a transcendental thematic continuity serves as a hermeneutical framework according to which spatial patterns or imaginative arrangements can be associated with one another through time. It is only as a thematic continuity, or by their referential affinity, that successive patterns of representation can be referred to a single object.<sup>498</sup> Kant himself says: ‘the ground of the possibility of the association of ideas, so far as it lies in the object, is called the affinity of the manifold’.<sup>499</sup> Thus it becomes clear that the activity of productive or transcendental imagination is not concerned with the making of images, but rather with the construal of fluctuating sensible appearances in terms of spatio-temporal patterning; an interpretation that connects together the shifting moments of a changing sensory manifold according to a thematic unity, whose transcendental rule is given through categories of the pure understanding.<sup>500</sup>

It has been shown in chapter three that transcendental imagination mediates the conceptual categories that form the armature of the transcendental unity of apperception through the activity of schematism.<sup>501</sup> What has just been discussed as an activity of imaginative synthesis according to thematic affinity, *as guided by* conceptual rules of temporal order, is just this imaginative creation of schemata, or modes of imaginative construal *serving to guide* pure conceptual categories in temporal combination. This is what has been referred to above concerning the organic nature of transcendental imaginative structure as a grounded-ground. Without such imaginative combination, pure concepts of the understanding could not be brought to bear on appearances to give them the categorical structure of objectively sequential experience.<sup>502</sup> Imaginative mediation thus presents us with a logical paradox. While it is true to say that imagination is guided by conceptual rules in the construal of ordered affinity among the manifold of sense, it is no less true to say that imagination guides a faculty of pure understanding, and that without the imaginative activity on which pure concepts depend for their applicability to sense data, categorically structured experience could not occur. Paradoxically, it is as true to say that imagination leads conceptuality as that it follows its rules.<sup>503</sup>

<sup>497</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* vol 1, p. 367.

<sup>498</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* vol 1, p. 367.

<sup>499</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A113.

<sup>500</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 209; Young, ‘Kant's View of Imagination’, p. 142.

<sup>501</sup> Chapter 3 sections 3.1 & 3.2.

<sup>502</sup> Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism*, p. 209.

<sup>503</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A118-A119.

On this basis, we can see that no experience would be possible without the conceptually paradoxical, imaginative coordination of sense data and concepts. Productive imagination mediates between the active and passive parts of experience. Productive imagination, through its transcendental, or pure, productive activity,<sup>504</sup> both enables, and is enabled by, a categorically structured, focal unity of objective consciousness.<sup>505</sup> Moreover, this transcendental unity of consciousness itself displays a similarly ambiguous structure. It is to the imagination's relation to this latter ambiguity, or rather polarity of structure that I now turn.

As seen in chapter three, transcendental subjectivity, or the unity of transcendental apperception, is the condition of transcendental objectivity as its own polar correlate, an objectivity manifesting through judgements or acts of unification for transcendental subjectivity according to pure conceptual categories.<sup>506</sup> All consciousness is 'intentional' or referential, which is to say no more than that all consciousness is 'consciousness of' something: all subjectivity exists as such only in relation to an object. Kant can only identify this necessary, conceptually structured objective correlate and focus for transcendental apperception as 'X',<sup>507</sup> as a consciousness of... something: transcendental objectivity cannot have any more informative definition than is contained in describing it as *that of which* transcendental subjectivity is conscious, as that focus of attention without which there could be no transcendental unity or singleness of consciousness.

The objective structure of experience is thus a categorically structured objectivity for a subject, which is logically prior to all consideration of any empirical objects which this polar, transcendental subject-object structure makes possible. The two poles of transcendental subjectivity and objectivity, as structural correlates, are mutually defining: they only make sense in relation to one another. They are polar concepts, and thus mutually constitutive, and I suggest that the transcendental or productive imagination is the ground of both.

Paton writes of representations in Kant as imaginatively apprehended,<sup>508</sup> that such representations 'would be described more accurately, if they were said to be neither subjective nor objective, since for mere apprehension they are certainly not modifications of a subject which is distinguished from objects'.<sup>509</sup> In a footnote Paton suggests that 'as apprehended, ideas [representations] are modifications of the mind or events in mental history. We do not,

<sup>504</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A118.

<sup>505</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A108-A109.

<sup>506</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A108-A109.

<sup>507</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A104.

<sup>508</sup> That is, with regard to the synthesis of apprehension considered in itself, analytically, or without reference to the role of understanding in possible experience.

<sup>509</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience* vol. 1, p. 360.



however, know them to be such except by inner sense and reflexion'.<sup>510</sup> Kant describes the imaginative synthesis of apprehension as the 'apprehension of the representations, as modifications of the mind in intuition',<sup>511</sup> and thus as the imaginatively enabled formal intuition by which all objective knowledge is mediated. This leads Paton to point out that the imaginative synthesis of the temporal manifold is neither subjective nor objective, since

it is through thought, and not through mere apprehension, that [representations] are recognised to be ideas of an object; and it is only when they are recognised to be ideas of an object that they are recognised to be themselves modifications of the mind. Knowledge of an object and knowledge of a subject are for Kant correlative terms, as the one always implies the other'.<sup>512</sup>

The apprehension of various sense data through their imaginative combination is a necessary part of experience, to be distinguished from the necessary conceptual components that structure fully objective experience.

Thus there is a necessary aspect of any objective experience which is imaginatively constituted. Through imaginative apprehension, the bringing to bear of transcendental concepts is made possible. But, as we have just seen from Paton's analysis, such imaginative apprehension cannot itself be described as either objective or subjective. Or stated more forcefully, imaginative apprehension *cannot* be either subjective or objective, since the productive imagination grounds the very possibility of transcendental subjectivity and objectivity as polar relations.<sup>513</sup>

I suggest on this basis, therefore, that there is thus a complex, polar relationship involving the transcendental imagination. The imagination is a source of the two poles of objective knowledge on the one hand, and, on the other, it is itself subordinate to the pure understanding whose concepts it schematises, whose rules it follows in synthesising the manifold. Thus I suggest that there is a mutuality, or epistemological inter-dependency of grounding and groundedness at work here. While there is no transcendental apperception without imaginative synthesis, there is no synthesis without necessary conceptual structure. Recalling what was learned in the last chapter with regard to Schelling's transcendental idealism, we can see that it is just this organic shape of reciprocal causality manifested by the activity of the transcendental imagination that post-Kantian thinkers were to pick up on in 'going beyond' Kant.

Looking back at what we have learned on the whole about Kant's conception of imagination, and especially in the light of the last three paragraphs, it becomes clear that this mutual or

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<sup>510</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* vol. 1, p. 360 (note 8).

<sup>511</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A97.

<sup>512</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* vol. 1, p. 361.

<sup>513</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A108-A109.

reciprocal grounding of the objective unity of apperception on the one hand, and transcendental imagination on the other to which I have just been drawing attention, is responsible for the peculiar epistemological position accorded to the imagination by Kant. Imagination is said to be a component of the mind's spontaneity, since all synthesis belongs to the imagination. And yet as a mode of intuition, imagination is intrinsically located within sensible receptivity, which it can only synthesise on the basis of the conceptual, categorical forms to which its schematising activity is subservient. But again, such categorically structuring conceptual features could be said to depend on this same imaginative schematic activity, as a mode of hypotyposis, or presentation of concepts, on the basis of which concepts are introduced to sensible representations. The transcendental imagination is thus both conceptual guide and conceptually guided.

As organically structured, there can be no *unambiguous priority* of conceptuality over imaginative construal, or vice versa. Consequently, there can be no possibility of disambiguating the foundations of human experience: our status as responding to reality through imaginative apprehension. The situation or context becomes meaningful in light of our creative interpretation, and our interpretation can only find its meaningfulness from within a pre-supposed situation. We have already seen, (in addressing Kierkegaard's 'inward' imagination, in chapter two), that ethically motivated attention to a given situation involves *a tension of imaginative activity in receptivity*. Chapter seven will further illumine the insights just gained concerning the nature of imagination: that it is at once both active guide and receptively guided in the construal of a given context; that imaginative discovery and invention are interfused.

On the basis of this difficult argument, and in light of Bergson's account of conceptually irreducible process, as offered in chapter four, we can say the following. That which enables Kantian, categorically structured time is the same transcendental imaginative process whose structuring activity in relation to the form of inner sense is enabled by the pure understanding. The transcendental imagination is both guide and guided. So we conclude that there is an organic process of reciprocal causality at work deep in the imaginative substructure of Kant's transcendental deduction. But this means that Kant's organically-structured, transcendental imagination can be thought of as itself the kind of causally irreducible productive process to which Bergson draws attention. Transcendental or productive imagination, as that which enables but is irreducible to a schematic or causally ordered experience of time, may thus be understood as a causally irreducible, organically ordered productive process, or in Bergson's terms, a 'durational' activity. But conversely, and importantly, we are now confronted with the

possibility that this productive, temporalising process to which Bergson draws attention as ‘duration’ is, as paradoxically or organically ordered, a causally irreducible imaginative activity.

I am stating this latter conclusion in a merely preliminary way at this point. As we look more deeply into the nature of Bergsonian intuition – and of that which is intuited – in the next section, a firmer identification of Bergsonian metaphysical time and Kantian imagination will become possible. Not only will these findings concerning Kantian imaginative process and Bergsonian duration inform discussion in the next section of the rational status of Bergson’s philosophical intuition, but they will be seen to bear fruit in the final chapter, in relation to Coleridge’s aesthetics, as we build on findings regarding Kierkegaardian imagination in chapter two.

### **(3) Bergsonian intuition and Kantian aesthetic ideas**

The possible identification of Bergsonian duration and Kantian productive imaginative process, can be justified on the basis of an investigation into the epistemological status of Bergsonian philosophical intuition. The problem to be faced with regard to Bergsonian intuition is that, in his descriptions of intuited duration, Bergson would seem to be imparting conceptual knowledge about that which is the non-conceptual condition for conceptual determination (durational ‘life’). I would suggest that the Kantian account of reflective judgement, as addressed in chapter four, might shed some light here.

Arthur O. Lovejoy<sup>514</sup> suggests that Bergson’s durational thinking in fact arose out of a nineteenth century ‘semi-Kantian’<sup>515</sup> school of French philosophy, represented by thinkers such as Ravaisson and Renouvier. It is on this basis of a community of philosophical motivations that I will now attempt to show how Kant’s aesthetic theory can justify the rationality of Bergson’s use of conceptuality in relation to his intuitive metaphysics in general, and specifically in his account of such intuition in *Creative Evolution*.

It will be contended that Bergson’s metaphysic can be best accounted for not as irrationalism, as suggested by Bertrand Russell,<sup>516</sup> among others, but in terms of the subjective rationality of Kantian reflective judgement. I submit that Bergson’s philosophical practice is to write about duration by employing a non-determining use of concepts. In Kant’s terms, this means that Bergson brings an imaginatively mediated, reflective mode of judgement to bear in seeking to

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<sup>514</sup> Arthur O. Lovejoy, ‘Some Antecedents of the Philosophy of Bergson’, *Mind* 22: 88, (1913), pp. 465-483.

<sup>515</sup> Lovejoy, ‘Some Antecedents of the Philosophy of Bergson’, p. 467.

<sup>516</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 719-722.

communicate the conceptually indeterminable meaningfulness and directedness of duration.<sup>517</sup> These developments will open up the possibility of identifying the content of Bergson's formal concept of duration in terms of imaginative productivity.

According to Kant's account in the *Critique of Judgement*, as we discovered in the last chapter, aesthetic imagination leads conceptuality in free reflective interpretation of the ordered content presented in the aesthetic idea.<sup>518</sup> As we saw, the imaginative activity that gives rise to judgements of taste differs significantly from the productive imaginative activity that is analysed in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, in that imaginative synthesis in the aesthetic relation to an object is not geared towards objective cognition. This means that the aesthetic imaginative synthesis of the manifold is not determined by concepts of the understanding, and that the imagination is therefore in free play.<sup>519</sup> This freedom is not random, however, since imagination, although not determined by the conceptual faculty, is still oriented towards cognitive activity through its harmonious interaction with the understanding, but not towards specific acts of knowledge. Imagination's free synthesis excites the whole cognitive faculty, or the capacity to understand in general, to harmonise with its activity, without any determinate knowledge ensuing. The feeling of harmonious 'rightness' that this free interpretive activity generates grounds judgements of taste.<sup>520</sup>

To say 'x is beautiful' is to say that a harmonious and open-ended interpretive interaction is set up between the imagination and the understanding in response to x. In the judgement of taste, the powers of imaginative spontaneous receptivity and conceptual spontaneity that must come together in any judgement, (as an activity in which a concept is predicated of an imaginatively synthesised sensible representation), generate a wealth of interpretation without the possibility of arriving at any predicate that would be adequate to determine the meaningfulness of the aesthetic presentation. The judgement of taste is thus grounded ultimately in the twofold power of judgement itself,<sup>521</sup> as both imagination and conceptuality generate the pleasurable feeling on which the judgement depends.

However, the judgement of taste is only subjectively rational, since no object is determined through imaginative reflection. The subjective feeling of rational approval can, nevertheless, be justifiably expected of anyone experiencing the same aesthetic representation, since the same subjective cognitive structure, the same twofold constitution of the power of judgement, can be

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<sup>517</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>518</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>519</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9.

<sup>520</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, First Introduction, IX-XI.

<sup>521</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 35.

assumed to pertain amongst any normally functioning rational subjects.<sup>522</sup> The rationality or universality of the judgement of taste would perhaps, therefore, be more appropriately described as inter-subjective, than subjective. When one says ‘x is beautiful’, one assumes a universal voice,<sup>523</sup> since any person possessed of the same cognitive faculties of imagination and conceptuality could be reasonably expected to arrive at the same judgement in relation to the same aesthetic presentation.

Imagination and conceptuality, in aesthetic reflective judgement, resonate with one another in free interpretive play.<sup>524</sup> Imagination holds up a particular intuition – an aesthetic idea – to the faculty of concepts, stimulating reflection as an activity of comparison and connection of concepts. No one concept is adequate to the aesthetic representation.

In relation to art, imagination presents a particular symbolic intuition, an aesthetic idea, to the conceptual faculty, whose concepts are inadequate to determine the symbolic presentation.<sup>525</sup> A symbol is the imaginative representation of a theme, in such a manner that another ‘concept’<sup>526</sup> – an intrinsically un-intuitable rational idea – is suggested or intimated through the imaginatively enriched subject matter of the aesthetic idea.<sup>527</sup> Imagination presents the aesthetic idea to the understanding, provoking and awakening conceptual activity, and thus generating a surplus of conceptual reflection, of interpretive meaningfulness, that tends to expand indefinitely. This potentially infinite expansiveness of indeterminate meaning evokes or awakens an awareness of ideas of reason, themselves indefinite, and un-represent-able in any finite intuition.

But the artist utilises or conforms to his imaginative idea the learned, technical skills of his art to achieve his aims.<sup>528</sup> The artist utilises these skills to inform a subject matter or content in accordance with an overarching aesthetic meaningfulness that cannot be reduced to any single interpretation; that surpasses, indeterminately, the technical perfection, or merely academic perfection of the work.<sup>529</sup>

The hearer, reader or viewer of such aesthetic ideas manifesting in literary, plastic, pictorial or musical art-forms finds his own imagination stimulated to disinterested activity.<sup>530</sup> Free from

<sup>522</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 38.

<sup>523</sup> Wicks, *Kant on Judgment*, p. 35; Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 8.

<sup>524</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 9.

<sup>525</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>526</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 57.

<sup>527</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49; Wicks, *Kant on Judgment*, pp. 128-129.

<sup>528</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 44.

<sup>529</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §§ 45-46.

<sup>530</sup> That is, for the appreciator as for the artist, his productive or transcendental imagination, not the merely associative empirical imagination.

the schematising role which it performs in an enabling the mind to come to determining judgements, the imagination freely construes an indefinable meaningfulness pervading the whole work. This is the aesthetic idea, the informing principle of the meaningfully ordered work, a meaningful whole, organically informing and transforming the empirical elements portrayed or set forth in the work contemplated, be they words, tones, or visual representations. What the constituent parts of the work can be interpreted as, taken individually, is not identical to what they become in light of their overarching imaginative, organising principle: the artist's aesthetic idea. Even the artist himself would not be able to determine the content of his idea, but productive imagination 'bodies forth' its meaning unconsciously. The artist's consciousness exerts a measure of regulative direction, his empirical awareness managing and applying the learned techniques, the teachable skills of his art.<sup>531</sup>

By recurring to Kant's aesthetics, we have found that in producing a symbol pregnant with infinite or indeterminate meaningfulness – an aesthetic idea – the imagination unconsciously enables the disinterested purposiveness without determinate purpose that is an art-work's aesthetic significance, as opposed to its significance as an empirical artefact, or conscious purpose of human activity.<sup>532</sup> The infinite fruitfulness or significance embodied in an aesthetic idea cannot be determined in concepts of the understanding.<sup>533</sup> The appreciative listener, reader, or beholder finds his own imagination set in motion by this uncontainable significance, and his conceptual faculty responds interpretively, without ever exhausting or determining the idea's ever deepening significance.<sup>534</sup>

We have seen that Bergson comes to a very similar conclusion about the nature of his intuition of creative process, its independence from the determining judgements of the empirical intelligence.<sup>535</sup> Bergson maintains that life, or the *élan vital*, is intrinsically alien and inaccessible to discursive cognition. It is claimed that intuition of living duration is untranslatable into discursive knowledge,<sup>536</sup> and yet Bergson uses concepts to report or communicate this discursively untranslatable intuition. I suggest, therefore, that Bergson is using concepts in a poetically indeterminate manner; in Kant's terms, he describes his intuitions through the conceptuality of aesthetic reflection, or indeterminate judgement.<sup>537</sup> Only on such a basis can he avoid the charge of self-contradiction. Support for such an interpretation is

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<sup>531</sup> Wicks, *Kant on Judgment*, pp. 129-130.

<sup>532</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 11.

<sup>533</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>534</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 49.

<sup>535</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>536</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 189.

<sup>537</sup> See, for example, Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 199-200: I suggest that the intuitive grasp of a central moving principle in a mass of collected information here described suggests the apprehension of a dynamic aesthetic idea, in Kant's (and even more so, as we shall see, also Coleridge's) sense.

suggested by Bergson himself. In *Creative Evolution*, he compares the intuition of durational life to the mode of seeing of an artist.

Intelligence, by means of science, which is its work, will deliver up to us more and more completely the secret of physical operations; of life it brings us, and moreover only claims to bring us, a translation in terms of inertia. It goes all round life, taking from outside the greatest possible number of views of it, drawing it into itself instead of entering into it. But it is to the very inwardness of life that *intuition* leads us, – by intuition I mean instinct that has become disinterested, self-conscious, and capable of reflecting on its object and of enlarging it indefinitely.

That an effort of this kind is not impossible is proved by the existence in man of an aesthetic faculty along with normal perception. Our eye perceives the features of the living being, merely as assembled, not as mutually organised. The intention of life, the simple movement that runs through the lines, that binds them together and gives them significance, escapes it. This intention is just what the artist tries to regain, by placing himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model.<sup>538</sup>

Bergson goes on to distinguish, as differentiated modes of *one and the same kind*, between aesthetic and philosophical intuition:

It is true that this aesthetic intuition, like external perception, only attains the individual. But we can conceive an inquiry turned in the same direction as art, which would take life *in general* for its object, just as physical science, in following to the end the direction pointed out by external perception, prolongs the individual facts into general laws.<sup>539</sup>

Thus I maintain – in light of the foregoing discussion, and on the basis of what we have seen in the last chapter concerning Kant's reflective judgement – that Bergson is utilising an aesthetic style of thinking, explicable in terms of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, to take issue with – and limit the applicability of the findings of – Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. And in view of this, I do not find Bergson guilty of the charge of irrationalism, as levelled against him by Bertrand Russell.<sup>540</sup> A. D. Lindsay quotes Bergson in distinguishing between two varieties of intellectualism;<sup>541</sup> one sort is what Kant, in full agreement, might have derided as a rigid,

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<sup>538</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 186.

<sup>539</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 186-7. Bergson's italics.

<sup>540</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy*, pp. 719-722.

<sup>541</sup> A. D. Lindsay, *The Philosophy of Bergson*, (Montana: Kessinger, 2010), pp. 18-19.

rationalistic dogmatism (to be discouraged), while the other is the fluid, organic thinking which stays close to the source of things:

You are quite right to distinguish between thought drawn from its profound sources and superficial thought, which is ready to fix itself in formulas. Automatism is the enemy. That is true of the intellectual life, as of the physical and moral life. There are two kinds of intellectualism, the true, which lives its ideas; and a false intellectualism, which immobilises moving ideas into solidified concepts to play with them like counters.<sup>542</sup>

Thus in spite of his lyrical style – a style born of an aesthetic mode of reflective rationality, familiar to us from Kant's third *Critique* – Bergson's philosophical intuition is as distinct from merely irrational 'gut feeling' as it is from narrow rationalism.

It is important, therefore, to recognise that by interpreting Bergsonian intuition in terms of Kantian aesthetic judgement, we are enabled to fix the rational status of Bergson's metaphysics, freeing him from charges of irrationalism. His metaphysic might be classified as subjectively rational, (to use the Kantian term as applied to aesthetic judgements of taste), or not capable of verification in the same manner as the empirical sciences, but nevertheless issuing in judgements with which anyone sharing in the same, or a similar, intuiting relation could be expected to agree. Bergson's somewhat opaque doctrine of intellectual intuition can thus be reconstructed in terms of Kantian aesthetics as the free-play of imagination and understanding. Imagination in free play, and aesthetically reflective conceptual interpretation (as the appropriate means of its elucidation), are in effect given the task by Bergson of showing the durational conditions of possibility of Kant's transcendental unity of apperception. Through aesthetic, imaginative reflection, Duration is shown to be the more ultimate condition of an objectively determined, transcendental imaginative synthesis that quantifies the qualitative movement of reality. Bergson uses imaginative description to draw attention to an essentially un-objectifiable and unpredictable temporal process.<sup>543</sup> And here we can regain contact with findings from the earlier parts of this chapter.

A key theme that emerged earlier is something we first discovered in relation to Kierkegaardian aesthetics: the imagination is always both active and passive.<sup>544</sup> Through analysis of Kant's conception of the imagination, the reason for this dual or ambiguous identity became clear. We saw that, in relation to Kant's transcendental deduction, a mutual or reciprocal grounding of the objective unity of apperception on the one hand, and transcendental imagination on the other, is

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<sup>542</sup> A. D. Lindsay, *The Philosophy of Bergson*, p. 19.

<sup>543</sup> For example, Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, p. 186.

<sup>544</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 276; Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 32.



responsible for the peculiar epistemological position accorded to the imagination by Kant. The transcendental imagination is both guide and guided, we discovered. So we concluded that there is an organic, reciprocal causality at work deep in the imaginative substructure of Kantian temporality. Time itself is rooted in organic, imaginative process.

We have just been discovering that Bergsonian duration, a primordially active and temporal metaphysical principle, gains rational elucidation in terms of Kantian reflective judgement. Moreover, as we saw in a preliminary way at the end of the last section, Bergsonian duration ceases to be a merely formal concept, if its content is indeed identifiable in terms of productive imagining. In what follows, I shall analyse this possible identification of Bergson's dynamic metaphysical process with Kantian imaginative productivity.

As Douglas Fawcett points out – thinking in terms of an imaginal ground of reality: a living creative process – the problem with Bergson's account of duration or creative temporality is that it bases in a purely formal concept, the *élan vital*, which Fawcett regards as one

which recognises indeed creative evolution, but leaves its content unread...An 'imperious impulse to create' [Bergson's description] is no more instructive than would be the derivation of change from psychical 'force' – a word.<sup>545</sup>

If such a 'force', on analysis, could be shown to be identifiable with the Kantian productive imagination as a creative process, this criticism is answered. Such an identification was suggested at the end of the last section. On the basis of what has been learned so far in this section, the elements are now in place to justify that identification. In what follows I will bring these elements together, affording an understanding of Bergsonian duration as an imaginal ground, a temporalising creative medium. A similar account of imaginative productivity, as we saw in the last chapter, is offered through Schelling's account of philosophical intuition; Bergson's non-teleological account, however, as I have indicated previously, is more theologically acceptable, on the Kierkegaardian grounds laid down in my first two chapters.

We saw in the last section that Kantian productive imagination is an organic reciprocity of grounding and groundedness, irreducible to either subjective or objective terms, as conditioning the very possibility of the bi-polar structure of objective experience.<sup>546</sup> Imagination thus *leads* conceptuality by *following* its rules. But what, exactly, is it about the imagination by which it leads, and which is not reducible to the conceptual understanding? This is to ask, what is the status and nature of that active or synthesising element in productive imagination that is not itself conceptual?

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<sup>545</sup> Douglas Fawcett, 'Imaginism and the World Process', *Mind*, 31: 22, (1922), p. 157.

<sup>546</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A118-A119.

Kant cannot answer this question. As we have seen, he says that we are ‘blind’ to the ultimate nature of imaginative activity: ‘synthesis in general [...] is the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever’.<sup>547</sup> We have seen how Bergson responds to Kant concerning the ultimate ground of possible experience in terms of an *élan vital*, or organically structured metaphysical process. We have also seen, in section two, that such an organic structure also characterises Kantian productive imagination. The possible identification of Kant’s productive imagination with Bergson’s durational process was thus made at the end of section two, in a preliminary way. But before we could fully acknowledge Bergson’s insights into dynamic metaphysical process, we had to justify his epistemic access to such a pre-conceptual productivity. We then found that Bergson’s productive intuition can be analysed in terms of Kant’s account of imagination’s role in aesthetically reflective judgement. An identification of Bergsonian duration and Kantian imagination thus becomes justifiable, as Bergson’s intuition can now be understood as an imaginative process that has been raised to philosophical consciousness, delivering insights into its own activity through aesthetically reflective judgement. On this basis we are now able to answer the question posed in the last paragraph explicitly: Kant’s imagination productively synthesises experience as that metaphysical productivity to which Bergson points, as an *élan vital*.

The very term ‘pre-conceptual’, as used to describe such a productive imaginative intuition of durational process, is misleading, as implying a uni-directional temporal order for organic, imaginative action-in-passivity. We learned from Kierkegaard, in chapter one, that we are always already interpreting reality around us and our place within it,<sup>548</sup> that existence is always *in media res*. In this light, and in view of the foregoing paragraphs, one might suggest that Bergson’s participative intuition of a dynamic ‘ground’ of conceptual awareness must itself be always already in process of mediation. In Bergsonian intuition, and thus through the indeterminate conceptuality of aesthetic engagement, we participate in our own enabling source as imagination brings its own nature as a mediating process into the light. Imagination thus intuitively itself as essentially an organically productive, durational *élan vital*.

In light of the paradoxically organic structure of the imagination as both cause and effect of itself, a significant distinction, with regard to my overarching and cumulative argument, can be drawn between the roles of the imagination in knowledge and in aesthetic interpretation. I have been suggesting that Bergson’s merely formal concept of a durational *élan vital* can be reunited

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<sup>547</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A78.

<sup>548</sup> Kierkegaard, *Johannes Climacus*, pp. 167-8.

with its own, proper content: the activity of the transcendental imagination, as it conditions possible experience. On the other hand, Kant's transcendental objectivity will itself be relativised or contextualised, as it is seen to mask – while actually being enabled by – the organic creativity of the productive imagination, understood in terms of durational freedom.

Thus, building on findings from the last chapter, I suggest that Bergson is right to regard Kantian 'spatialised' time as far from fundamental to human experience. By amplifying and clarifying Bergson's account of durational 'intuition' in terms of Kantian, subjectively rational, aesthetically reflective judgement, we have found that the nature of Bergsonian duration is imaginal: what Kant calls the productive imagination is a fundamental and organic temporal process.

#### **(4) Conclusion: The Rationality of a Creative Mystery**

By analysing Bergsonian intuition in terms of Kantian imaginative conceptual reflection, the apparently objective language which Bergson uses can be justified as an aesthetically suggestive and non-determining use of concepts. I shall be arguing, in relation to the aesthetic thinking of Coleridge, in chapter seven, that just this 'Bergsonian' kind of aesthetically suggestive reflection is characteristic of an ethically receptive, conceptually indeterminate apprehension of transcendent creativity, as mediated through art and natural beauty.

Bergson argues, as we learned in the last chapter, that time, at a more fundamental level of engagement with our own reality than that adapted to calculative pursuits in dealing with the external world, is never truly predictable in advance. However, throw a spatialising web over such intrinsically unpredictable freedom and it is lost among the necessities of calculative thought. The spatialising construct, while useful at a certain practical level, nonetheless alienates us from the imaginative openness to transformation which is our own-most possibility. We are not determined things, our 'basis' is freedom as opportunity and invitation to creative response, as Kierkegaard shows us. Through this chapter we have learned that the roots of Kierkegaard's position as laid out in chapter one are found in a Kantian concept of imaginative productivity, and Bergsonian duration has given us a open-ended and dynamic temporal model through which to relate Kierkegaard's thought to the romantic imagination, to the post-Kantian insights into organically creative process from which Kierkegaard is alienated, and on which he nevertheless relies in his creative mode of communication.

We have seen that an analysis of the nature and rational status of Bergson's philosophical intuition, interacting with Kant's account of the aesthetic and theoretical roles of productive

imagination, brings to light what romantic writers have referred to as an unsuspected dimension of 'depth' that is fundamental to our ability to engage with reality on a more accustomed, empirical level. This mysterious depth is, of course, given a thoroughly rational analysis by Kant in terms of a transcendental act of imaginative synthesis on the one hand, and an account of unconscious imaginative activity in the vision of the world that is brought to life in art. This Kantian analysis enables the inherent intelligibility of Bergson's thought to be clarified by assigning imaginative content to its sinuous and elusive formality. But nevertheless, even Kantian analysis finds the mystery of transcendental imaginative process to be irreducible to straightforward, uni-dimensional and uni-directional causal determination. And this organically irreducible aspect of real and only partially accountable creative process has come across, I hope, in the course of our engagement with Bergson. Further light will be shed on this ultimately theological mystery of Creativity, in relation to the romantic vision of Coleridge which we will be addressing over the next two chapters.



## VI

### Coleridge, dialectics & Christian theology<sup>549</sup>

#### Introduction: a Statement of Aims for this Chapter

Coleridge's thinking is to be addressed at this point for two main reasons to which I shall shortly draw attention. Firstly, however, a note about the complexity of Coleridge's religious, theoretical and artistic positions needs to be made, and borne in mind through what follows.

At a first appraisal, and in relation to the concerns of this thesis, we can distinguish two 'Coleridges': a romantic poet and a philosopher. But looked at more deeply, I will be arguing that an intimately experienced, philosophical or metaphysical vision – as integral to his personal make-up – and an urge to express this vision in a diversity of forms is a prime motivation behind both his early poetic successes and his later theoretical explorations.<sup>550</sup> Thus the poetry and the philosophy were deeply intertwined in Coleridge's worldview. As is witnessed through his less formally systematic critical, aesthetic and poetic insights, Coleridge's philosophising and his aesthetic experiences and activities cannot be rigidly compartmentalised because they are organically, rather than accidentally, combined as equally expressive of the rich unity-in-diversity of the man's extraordinary personality.<sup>551</sup>

However, I shall suggest that, as a whole, Coleridge's formally systematic thinking, though inspired as it is by high religious, ethical and poetic ideals, faces insurmountable difficulties because of a basic incompatibility between his aesthetic, ethical and religious insights and commitments on the one hand, and the philosophical conceptuality through which he seeks, and, I submit, fails, to do them justice on the other. Coleridge the religio-philosophical poet and aesthetician will be dealt with in the next chapter. Here I focus on Coleridge the systematic dialectician.

Coleridge was drawn to Kantian and post-Kantian thinking because he believed he saw there a means to reconcile his poetic faith in the experienced presence of God as intimated through the natural world, with his Christian faith in a personal freedom that, while ethically fallen, is yet potentially open to redemption through the abiding love of an incarnate God.<sup>552</sup> However, the *a priori* necessitarian tendency of post-Kantian idealism leads to a Spinozistic *denial* of personal

<sup>549</sup> For additional contextualising background to the contents of this chapter, please see appendix 4, below.

<sup>550</sup> J. Shawcross, Introduction to *Biographia Literaria*, by S. T. Coleridge, edited with his *Aesthetic Essays*, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), pp. xi-xii, xviii-xxi.

<sup>551</sup> Kathleen Coburn, *Experience into Thought*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 16-17, 70, 84; Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, (San Rafael: The Barfield Press, 1971), pp. 44, 59, 210 n. 3, 125, 132.

<sup>552</sup> Shawcross, Introduction to *Biographia Literaria*, pp. lvii, lx, lxxv.

freedom, the basis of Kierkegaardian faith and ethical commitment, just as it is the source of the freshness vigour and originality of artistic spontaneity.<sup>553</sup>

Moreover, I will suggest that the revealed reality of salvation in Christ, a gift that one could not attain for oneself, least of all by mere thinking, as we found in chapters one and two, is thoroughly compromised by the overarching teleological trajectory of idealist metaphysics such as Coleridge's, as has been demonstrated already in chapter four in connection with the thought of Kant and Schelling. I would suggest, therefore, that Coleridge faced a theoretical and ethical impasse. I conclude that this intellectual and emotional unrest – possibly exacerbated by his acute personal problems<sup>554</sup> – caused him to exert himself untiringly (but, I shall argue, to no avail in his systematic output) in the attempt to reconcile his poetic intimations of the 'one life, within us and abroad', as he himself expressed it in verse,<sup>555</sup> with a life lived in faithful commitment to the love of a personal Saviour.<sup>556</sup>

Having established this as the framework through which I will address Coleridge's thought in what follows in this and the subsequent chapter, I will now suggest just why he is to be addressed at all in this thesis, and moreover, why he is a unique focus for my thinking, as uniting different strands. I have already drawn attention to Coleridge's quest for reconciliation between two, equally compelling personal commitments: to theologically and philosophically pregnant aesthetic insights on the one hand, and, on the other, a living faith in both personal freedom and the need for ethical salvation. Such a reconciliation is the overall goal of my own thesis, as declared already in chapter one. The project aims at a reconciliation of the perceived truth of Kierkegaardian existential theology with Kierkegaard's own need to express this theology through aesthetically indirect forms of communication. Therefore I too am seeking a rapprochement between the paradox of Christian faith and the insights of human aesthetic discernment.

Yet it is all too easy, as is evident from much of Coleridge's writing, to account for natural and artistic beauty and sublimity in terms of an overarching neoplatonic or idealist *a priori* conceptuality.<sup>557</sup> But then, as we know from Kierkegaard, one does not even begin to touch the edges of the responsibilities – as also of the sober joy – of a life of genuine relationship to Christ; a life that surely one can never feel comfortable in calling one's own, no matter how long and hard one seeks it. But it will emerge on the basis of this chapter, in the next, that

<sup>553</sup> Shawcross, Introduction to *Biographia Literaria* vol. 1, p. lxxii.

<sup>554</sup> See Coburn, *Experience into Thought*, pp. 15-16, 60-, 79, 11, 25, 26.

<sup>555</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Eolian Harp', in Ernest Hartley Coleridge (ed.), *Poetical Works*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 100-2.

<sup>556</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, John Beer (ed.), *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), vol. 9, pp. 187-8.

<sup>557</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, pp. 72, 183-4.

analysis leads to the suggestion that Coleridge's verse and aesthetic contemplation does indeed enact what he seeks – and I will argue, fails – to account for theoretically through his systematic work.

In this chapter I suggest that in the long run, Coleridge was hindered rather than helped by the panentheistic post-Kantian conceptuality through which he sought to reconcile aesthetic experience and ethical faith.<sup>558</sup> It has already been argued (in chapter four) that Kant's transcendental conceptual determinism, leading as it does to a 'spatialisation' of time, is incompatible with genuine revelatory novelty, and the thought of Bergson was put forward as a potential corrective of such schematised time in the post-Kantian tradition. I will show in this chapter that the same problem of *a priori* teleology is greatly responsible for the failure of Coleridge's systematisation of his aesthetic and religious insights and commitments.

The elucidation of this latter claim will advance the theological aims of my thesis by drawing further attention to the deficiencies of idealistic teleology to accommodate a genuinely un-pre-thinkable revelation, such as we have seen to be the essence of faith as Kierkegaard understands it. I will thus point towards the next chapter by suggesting that Coleridge's aesthetic theory, his poetic activity, and his experience of the irreducibly qualitative significance of nature is better understood when seen in a Bergsonian light, than through the Platonic and Kantian prisms that diverted its aesthetic – and ethical – import. I further suggest that such a durational re-contextualisation of Coleridge's project allows us to see the direction in which a theoretical reconciliation of aesthetics and Kierkegaardian faith could be achieved. Such is the ultimately frustrated goal of Coleridge, as I intend to show here; such also is the need of Kierkegaard, as I have established already. Firstly, I must give an analysis of certain focal distinctions that are key to an understanding of Coleridge's systematic thought.

### **(1) A critical survey of Coleridgean Metaphysical Conceptuality**

A critical survey of Coleridgean philosophical positions will now be undertaken, in order to draw attention to the systematic and organic nature of Coleridge's metaphysical thinking as a whole, and by so doing, to highlight areas that are open to criticism along the lines indicated in my statement of aims for this chapter, above.

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<sup>558</sup> McFarland, Thomas, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 253-254.



I propose to show that Coleridge proposes a kind of aesthetically indeterminate, metaphysical insight, through metaphysical ideas, or archetypal forms, mediated by the power of imagination, conceived as having an overarching and primarily epistemological role.<sup>559</sup> Such metaphysical insight is conceived as inaccessible to the empirical understanding, although the transcendental categories governing the function of the understanding are themselves seen as constitutively dependent on the illuminative power of metaphysical ideas, and thus also on the epistemological role of imagination.<sup>560</sup>

### **(1.1) The distinction between reason and understanding**

Building on the transcendental epistemology of Kant that we addressed in chapters three and four, Coleridge distinguishes between reason and understanding.<sup>561</sup> Reason, as one and indivisible, pervades and endows all other functions of the mind, while manifesting originally and primarily as conscience. Conscience, or the effective immanence of a transcendent and ontologically constitutive reason, plays a crucial epistemological role for Coleridge, as we shall see.<sup>562</sup> As the immanence of a transcendent and creative, constructive or constitutive principle, reason is thus not regarded by Coleridge as itself a function of the individual mind, as is the case with the understanding, will, and feelings. Reason is rooted in God, transcending the individual mind's participation of it.<sup>563</sup> Coleridge fully embraces Kant's distinction between reason and understanding. As we have seen, Kant regards concepts of the understanding, in union with sensibility, as that which gives objectivity to experience. On the other hand, reason for Kant has a merely regulative role, and does not add to the content of actual knowledge. Coleridge, however, sees reason as fully constitutive: that is, as an organ of super-sensory or metaphysical knowledge.<sup>564</sup>

In his objective metaphysical thought, Coleridge allows that the concepts of the understanding may subserve a higher norm than the Kantian transcendental categories (e.g., cause and effect) proper to their usual function. Such a higher norm is found in the authority of metaphysically constitutive ideas of reason, from which, like Schelling and, in his own way, Hegel, (as saw in chapter 1), Coleridge derives a bi-polar or organic logic of differentiated identity, over and above the Aristotelian logic of non-contradiction suitable only to the work of the empirical

<sup>559</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Statesman's Manual', in *Lay Sermons*, R. J. White (ed.), *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), vol. 6, Appendix C, pp. 69-70; Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, pp. 77, 111-12, 118.

<sup>560</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, pp. 166, 216-19, 469; Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, pp. 96-7.

<sup>561</sup> Coleridge, *The Friend*, Barbara E. Rooke (ed.) 2 parts. *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 154-61.

<sup>562</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 148, 263 fn., 469; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments*, H. J. Jackson and R. J. de J. Jackson (ed.) 2 parts, *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), vol. 11, part 2, pp. 833-844.

<sup>563</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, Appendix C, pp. 69-70; Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, pp. 141, 147-8; Coleridge, *The Friend*, part 1, pp. 157-8; Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, Thomas McFarland (ed.), *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) vol. 15, pp. lvi, lxvii-lxviii.

<sup>564</sup> Muirhead, John H., *Coleridge as Philosopher*, (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1930), p. 95.

understanding. Thus in metaphysical connection and determination, the logic of 'either/or' is replaced by that of 'both/and'.<sup>565</sup>

In the long run, as I intend to show in this chapter, it is Coleridge's use of an idealist logic of differentiated identity – a mere thought-mechanism or instrumentality through which imaginatively indeterminate and thus incalculable polar oppositions are pre-conceived and artificially harmonised – which I find responsible for the failure of his metaphysics from the standpoint of a Kierkegaardian theological norm, as set out in the first two chapters.<sup>566</sup> I shall argue later in this chapter that in constructing a logical model of imaginative process through which conceptually irreducible and imaginatively co-dependent oppositions are progressively harmonised, and thus distorted.<sup>567</sup> It will be suggested that Coleridge must implicitly be working to a schematically linear, or empirically causal temporal schedule. Such a Kantian understanding of time, as analysed and criticised earlier, is unable, intrinsically, to do justice to the organic or conceptually non-linear processes that Coleridge seeks to explain. I shall argue that, while seeming to offer the possibility of a non-dogmatic or properly transcendental metaphysic, Coleridge's reliance on a concept of time reduced to a Kantian transcendental schematism of originally durational process blinds him to the organic nature of that temporal process; blinds him to duration's irreducibility to the empirically calculable terms which govern Kant's account of the form of inner sense as merely an instrumental condition of empirically calculable knowledge.

G. N. G. Orsini suggests that Coleridge re-construes Kant's dialectical antinomies of reason – the self-refuting ability of reason to argue both for and against any given metaphysical propositions which equal logical correctness – as a dialectic of the understanding.<sup>568</sup> Thus it is not reason that is at fault, for Coleridge, but the understanding, when it tries to use its concepts beyond their transcendently assigned, empirical remit. Thus Coleridge writes in his *Logic*: follows.

When from two premises, both of which are affirmed by equal right by the understanding, the understanding itself by legitimate deductions can arrive at two contradictory conclusions, the only possible solution of the difficulty is found in assuming that the understanding has been applying its own forms and functions, or those which it has borrowed from the sense, to objects which do not fall under its cognisance; as when, for instance, the understanding applies the forms of time and

<sup>565</sup> See Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, chapters 1 to 3.

<sup>566</sup> See Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, pp. 26-40.

<sup>567</sup> See for example, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'Theory of Life', in *Shorter Works and Fragments*, part 1, pp. 481-557.

<sup>568</sup> G. N. G. Orsini, *Coleridge and German Idealism*, (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), p. 138.

space, of quantity, quality and relation, to the idea of the Supreme Being, or of things themselves contradistinguished from phenomena.<sup>569</sup>

What for Kant rules out the possibility of metaphysical knowledge only serves to show, for Coleridge, the inadequacy of the logic of the understanding for dealing with metaphysical issues. Metaphysics has its own, proper logic involving, as we shall see, aesthetic insight into the structure of imaginatively mediated metaphysical ideas, or ideas of reason.

### **(1.2) Primary and secondary imagination: imagination as an epistemological source and medium of experience in general, also as a source and medium for metaphysically intimative ideas of reason**

Imagination, as envisaged by Coleridge, has two, distinct, epistemological roles. In addition to mediating ideas of reason in its secondary or artistic role, primary imagination, (on which the secondary role is dependent), acts in a similar way to Kant's transcendental imagination (as already discussed in some detail in chapter three).<sup>570</sup> Primary imagination is fundamental to any possible experience for Coleridge, as it is for Kant.<sup>571</sup> The primary epistemological role of imagination for Coleridge, as conditioning in relation to conscience the possibility of any experience, will be dealt with in later in this chapter, and, through other aspects, in the next.

Imagination, in both its roles, is characterised as a unifying function, mediating the possibility of subjective and objective distinctions, and thus of possible experience.<sup>572</sup> Furthermore, as an ontologically constitutive unifying function, imagination is the principle of all synthetic organisation,<sup>573</sup> or of all organisation that, while it may be analysed in terms of cause and effect through the instrumentalisation of reality made possible by the calculative understanding, cannot be reduced to an empirical causal account.

Given this understanding of the imagination (both primary and secondary or artistic), and building on the Kantian conception of the regulative, symbolic function of aesthetic ideas

<sup>569</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Logic*, J. R. De J. Jackson (ed.), *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 139-140.

<sup>570</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* 2 parts, James Engell and W. Jackson-Bate (ed.), *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, part 1, pp. 293-4, 304.

<sup>571</sup> Thus I would agree with Owen Barfield's interpretation of primary imagination (Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, p. 77) against that of W. H. Auden (see for example, Patrick Harpur, *Daimonic Reality*, (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 120-121). Whereas Auden holds that the primary imagination is reserved for rare encounters with what might be described, following Rudolf Otto (see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (second edition), John W. Harvey (tr.) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958)), as 'the Holy', or numinous being, textual evidence, such as I present in the course of this chapter and the next, suggests a far more fundamental epistemological role for primary imagination. The holiness of primary imagination – which indeed, as we shall see, Coleridge describes as an echo in consciousness of 'the great I AM' (Yahweh or the Tetragrammaton) – is rooted in imagination's enabling role in an epistemologically foundational response to conscience (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 193-4). Coleridge's, as we shall see, is an ethico-epistemology, and an imaginatively mediated fidelity of the ego to conscience, as self-consciousness's condition of possibility, is, for Coleridge, also the primary sense of faith in the religious sense. Coleridge thus aligns faith with a Kantian-inspired notion of practical reason's categorical imperative, conceived as the authoritative voice of conscience, acting both as an epistemological and ethical principle, or *Idea idearum*.

<sup>572</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 80-4, 168-71.

<sup>573</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 80-4, 168-71; Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, pp. 76-7.

(which we met in chapter four), Coleridge gives to such Kantian ideas a constitutive role as quasi-Platonic archetypes or metaphysical forms, while retaining their Kantian aesthetic indeterminacy, or metaphysically intimative character;<sup>574</sup> a characteristic more guardedly acknowledged even by Kant, as we saw, in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*. It is this overarching or organic relationship between parts to form a whole irreducible to the sum of those parts, considered merely as empirical causes acting upon one another, which is meant by their organic form, as we learned from Kant with regard to natural organisms and aesthetic symbols in chapter four. The organic form is in effect the final causality which has to be considered, at least regulatively, by Kant, and constitutively by Coleridge, as that which constitutes the natural organism or which is constitutive of aesthetic significance, while transcending the possibility of an empirical explanation in terms of cause and effect.

So the pattern of unity in terms of both content and form of the Coleridgean idea, thus conceived as an aesthetic metaphysical symbol, is imaginatively mediated. Imagination is held to be the guiding power through which ideas of reason are organised, and through which a conceptually indeterminate metaphysical significance supervenes upon the explicit significance of all the various contents of the idea. The contents portrayed in an idea of reason are formally organised in such a way as to elicit a significance transcending the content displayed when considered analytically and outside of an aesthetic relationship between perceiver and perceived, which is to say, without due attention to the relationships through which the contents are organised.<sup>575</sup> *Poesis* is Coleridge's technical term for what is discussed here. The significance of *poesis* will be addressed as we proceed in this and the following chapter. For the moment I will indicate briefly that for Coleridge, following Kant and Schelling, *poesis* concerns an organisational principle in all art (whether poetry, painting, sculpture or music) through which the intrinsic significance of the artwork is manifested. *Poesis* could thus be described as the transcendent imaginative creativity which works through the artist, as irreducible to the empirical techniques which he employs.

On this basis, Coleridge is able to assert that such ideas of reason are directly or univocally inexpressible by concepts of the understanding, which are fully competent only in the empirical sphere, in the determination of sensible intuitions. Crucially, however, concepts may give insight into metaphysically constitutive ideas through an indeterminate and imaginatively suggestive use of them. That is to say, for Coleridge, metaphysical ideas may be communicated with least distortion aesthetically, rather than determinately, via concepts of the understanding.

<sup>574</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, pp. 24-5. 50-1, Appendix C, pp. 69-70.

<sup>575</sup> See Lecture 13, 'Lectures on the Principles of Judgement, Culture and European Literature, 1818', in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, 2 parts, R. A. Foakes, (ed.), *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 5, part 2, pp. 217-225.

Hence Orsini's recognition, referred to above, that Kant's dialectic of reason – which would rule out speculative metaphysics – is understood by Coleridge in terms of a dialectic merely of the empirical understanding.

For Coleridge, metaphysical truth in itself can only be intimated indeterminately through aesthetic ideas, which he re-casts as creative archetypes proceeding from the divine mind, and which can only be manifested through artistic activity, which is to say, through the medium of the imagination considered in its secondary or artistic role. Here already we can see the high valuation which Coleridge accords to the role of artistic imagination, conceived as *poesis*, in the intimation of metaphysical truth. It is to this secondary or artistic imaginative role that I turn soon (1.5), after an initial methodological warning (1.4).

### **(1.3) Imagination, organisation, and conditions of possibility: a problem of conceptual presentation**

Remembering our earlier look at the Kantian conception of organic structure, and its overall philosophical importance in post-Kantian thought, this is the place to mention, once again, the intrinsically organic nature of Coleridge's thought. It is difficult to explain any one of the guiding concepts of his system without pre-supposing others not yet fully analysed. Such is the strength of an overarching wholeness of significance that guides and organises the pattern of the parts in his thinking, that it would be true to say that organic connection forms both the content and the form of Coleridge's system.<sup>576</sup> In both a primary epistemological mode and a related secondary role (through art as a means of metaphysical insight) – this secondary role forming the focus of the current subsection – Coleridge employs a concept of imagination which takes a similar form to that which we have already met in discussing Kant, Schelling and, with notable differences, Kierkegaard.

Transcendental imagination thus takes a central role in Coleridge's thought, and, to a greater extent than met with in discussions of these other thinkers, it is responsible for the irreducibly organic structure of his metaphysical enquiries. For this reason I have already had to anticipate a full and differentiated understanding of the concept of imagination – mentioning it briefly and anticipatively in connection with Coleridgean concepts of reason and understanding. Such anticipation is unavoidably involved in the explanation of all the other terms with which Coleridgean imagination is organically and thus systematically bound up, and of which it is in fact the transcendental epistemological condition of possibility, (as we shall find in a fuller analysis of primary imagination later and in the next chapter). The position reached so far

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<sup>576</sup> See, for example, Coleridge's 'Essays on the Principle of Method', in *The Friend* part 1, pp. 509-512; Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, pp. 69-70.

demands a fuller discussion of imagination in its secondary, or artistic-epistemological role next, reserving an appreciation of primary imagination's role in Coleridge's overarching ethical epistemology for later in this section. Thus equipped the reader should be in a position to appreciate the critical discussion of Coleridgean metaphysics that I shall advance in section three, in accordance with the plan set out in section one.

#### **(1.4) Transcendence through art: ideas of reason and the secondary or symbolic role of Coleridgean imagination**

Following on from the nature of the distinction between reason and the understanding addressed above, and in relation to the organising role of secondary imagination in conveying ideas of reason aesthetically, or with conceptual indeterminacy, a distinction arises in Coleridge's thought between symbols and signs.

A sign indicates without participating in the reality of that to which it points. A symbol, on the other hand, is a creation of the secondary or artistic imagination working with concepts (e.g., in poetry) and other phenomenal materials (e.g., in music or painting) to intimate, indeterminately, a metaphysically constitutive idea or creative principle, through the mode of combination of the materials involved.<sup>577</sup> A symbol can only be apprehended through the aesthetic relation to phenomenal reality, as it is through the power of imagination that the poet and his audience can participate in the transcendent order of meaning and being to which his symbols point, as themselves intimate embodiments of such transcendence.<sup>578</sup> Outside of such aesthetically participative relationship, all that is discernible is finite empirical objectivity, where the calculative understanding holds sway.

Coleridge distinguishes what, for him, is true poetry from imaginative, but primarily descriptive prose (e.g. novels), on the basis of an acute analysis of the unique role poetry performs, and the particular manner in which it does so, through a certain interactive response which it calls forth from the reader.<sup>579</sup>

Let us look closely at Coleridge's meaning in the following quotation, as we will find that in this densely packed passage Coleridge combines together materials of aesthetic and metaphysical significance, showing the crucial role of imagination as a productive, combining power in the aesthetic intimation of transcendent, ontological significance. Coleridge writes of the distinguishing mark of a true poem thus:

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<sup>577</sup> Coleridge, *The Friend* part 1, pp. 172, 492; Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 80-4.

<sup>578</sup> Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>579</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 2, pp. 10-18.

It is that pleasurable emotion, that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition: and in order to understand this, we must combine a more than ordinary sympathy with the objects, emotions, or incidents contemplated by the poet, consequent on a more than common sensibility, with a more than ordinary activity of the mind in respect of the fancy and the imagination.<sup>580</sup>

Here, in his 'Definition of Poetry' at the beginning of his *Lectures on Shakespeare*,<sup>581</sup> we see Coleridge thinking of the nature of a poem *in terms of the imagination conceived as a power organising a polarity of opposing forces*. Hence Coleridge's reference to a 'more than ordinary sympathy' indicates the passive, sensory pole of perception, which the imagination, as a unitive structuring power, integrates with an active polar correlate, 'a more than ordinary activity of the mind'. Thus Coleridge points to a polar, or organic complex of experiential attentive-receptiveness. The interaction of these polar experiential opposites is productive, opening insight out dispossessively or uncontrollably, as an aesthetic activity of receptiveness is permeated with a heightened emotional tone, or 'more than common sensibility'.

Coleridge continues:

Hence is produced a more vivid reflection of the activity modifying and correcting these truths by that sort of pleasurable emotion, which the exertion of all our faculties gives in a certain degree, but which can only be felt in perfection under the full play of those powers of mind, which are spontaneous rather than voluntary, and in which the effort required bears no proportion to the activity enjoyed.<sup>582</sup>

Coleridge here draws attention to the source of this heightened emotional tone, and we find that he is following Kant's account of the conditions of aesthetic experience in terms of the 'free play' of the faculties of intuition and conceptuality as transformed in interaction with the organising power of imagination.

Imagination, for Coleridge as for Kant,<sup>583</sup> 'modifies' the perceptive contents, and the conceptual interpretations which are never adequate to account for the imaginative patterning, but which it suggestively provokes. This interactive play of faculties, circling and mediated by the imaginative focus, gives a feeling of 'pleasurable emotion',<sup>584</sup> unique to the particular aesthetic

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<sup>580</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Lecture 3, 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12', in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 1, pp. 217-18.

<sup>581</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 3, 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12', in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 1, p. 217.

<sup>582</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 3, 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12', in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 1, p. 217.

<sup>583</sup> See chapter 4 section 3 for Kant's aesthetic imagination.

<sup>584</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 3, 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12', in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 1, p. 217.

event and activity in which it arises. Kant's and Coleridge's polar harmony is thus more than a blending or solution of opposites, such as is envisaged in Hegelian polar dialectic.<sup>585</sup>

However, elsewhere Coleridge indicates that this supervening significance cannot be reduced to the emotion that it elicits. Rather, as he makes clear in his essay *On Poesy or Art*, what is definitive of true poetry is the imaginative evocation of the creative principle indwelling the empirical objects that the artist seeks to interpret.<sup>586</sup> Coleridge sometimes conceived of this distinction in terms of the contrast of *forma formans* and *forma formatum*,<sup>587</sup> otherwise, as in *On Poetry and Art*, he described the same metaphysical distinction in terms of *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*,<sup>588</sup> a formulation which we have already met in chapter four, in relation to the thought of Schelling. Both formulations serve to distinguish between a dynamic or empowering formative or structuring principle and the empirical realities so informed. Thus these metaphysical formulations point to a transcendent significance which is reducible neither to objective nor subjective terms exclusively, but which is awakened by the imaginative interaction of subjective and objective poles of experience; such is a Coleridgean *idea* of reason,<sup>589</sup> as introduced above. A genuine poem will enlighten aesthetic experience in a conceptually irreducible manner, offering a trans-empirical significance for one in a proper aesthetic relation to that poem, a relation taking the form of an *imaginatively mediated attentive receptivity*.<sup>590</sup>

The imaginative nature of the apprehension of the Coleridgean idea means that through a flexing or tension of active and passive, objective and subjective elements, concepts are combined dynamically in a free play or imaginatively interactive relationship, and thus not determined through logical necessity.<sup>591</sup> This flexing or tensile role of imaginative discernment – ‘it dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate’<sup>592</sup> – will be shown in the next chapter to be at work Coleridge's own aesthetic thinking and insight. I will be suggesting this kind of imaginative activity is related to the subjective imaginative mode, described in chapter two, through which the transcendent Kierkegaardian Christological paradox is entertained, as elucidated helpfully by Ferreira in terms of the logically irreducible processes of metaphorical and *gestalt* transformations. The difference to be found between Kierkegaard and Coleridge in this regard is that Coleridge will seek to explain, theoretically, such a supervision of logically

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<sup>585</sup> For Hegel, see chapter 1 section 3.1.

<sup>586</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 13, ‘Lectures on the Principles of Judgement, Culture and European Literature, 1818’, in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 2, pp. 217-225.

<sup>587</sup> Coleridge, *The Friend*, part 1, p. 467n.

<sup>588</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 13, ‘Lectures on the Principles of Judgement, Culture and European Literature, 1818’, in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 2, pp. 217-225.

<sup>589</sup> Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, pp. 69-70.

<sup>590</sup> See Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, p. 76; Modiano, Raymonda, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, (London: Macmillan, 1985), p. 127.

<sup>591</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.

<sup>592</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.



transcendent insight, as embodied in his aesthetic writings, by invoking a higher, deductive logic, a transcendental metaphysical logic, based upon the concept of polarity. I shall be arguing later on in this and the subsequent chapter that it is through his attempt to tame imaginative activity through a polar conception of logic that Coleridge falls short of his theological mark in his systematic thought.

Considered purely aesthetically by Coleridge in his 'Definition of Poetry', and thus not in relation to his wider metaphysical project, there is no suggestion of this logical or conceptual closure in relation to a poetically mediated idea of reason; no attempt, through logical deduction, to dissolve the creative suggestiveness of the metaphysical insight as imaginatively intimated rather than known. This is why Coleridge distinguishes between the roles of poetry and science earlier in the passage from which these quotations are drawn.<sup>593</sup>

But it emerges as the quotation continues that this distinction between poetry and science is itself subsumed under a logic of productive, or synthetic polar opposition. Coleridge elsewhere more explicitly distinguishes the contrary from the opposite: poetry is not the contrary of science, but is opposed to it as knowledge's own otherness, its polar correlate. Both poetry and science involve the interplay of subjective and objective elements, but whereas empirical knowledge arises through objective synergy (as we learned from Kant in chapter three), aesthetic awareness emphasises the subjective pole of the subject-object relation through imaginative, conceptual indeterminacy. This latter

is the state which permits the production of a highly pleasurable whole, of which each part shall communicate for itself a distinct and conscious pleasure....Poetry is a species of composition, opposed to science, as having intellectual pleasure for its object [...] – but distinguished from other species of composition....by permitting a pleasure from the whole consistent with a consciousness of pleasure from the component parts – and the perfection of which is, from each part to communicate the greatest immediate pleasure compatible with the largest sum of pleasure on the whole.<sup>594</sup>

Here we see Coleridge drawing attention to the organic nature of the aesthetic perception of a poetic idea: a prior dynamic, imaginative whole of meaning is passively mediated by, yet paradoxically also actively structures, the interdependence of the parts which manifest ideal significance as a unity of power and meaning which is greater than and irreducible to the sum of those parts. As source of both dynamics and form, or power and significance, imagination

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<sup>593</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 3, 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12', in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 1, pp. 217-18.

<sup>594</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 3, 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12', in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 1, p. 217.

grounds the polarity of reality (power) and ideality (meaning), as also of activity and passivity, of subjectivity and objectivity: as their source, imagination enables such ontological polarities, whilst itself being neither active nor passive, neither subjective nor objective, neither real nor ideal exclusively.<sup>595</sup>

For Coleridge, such a concept of *poesis* informs all true artistic activity,<sup>596</sup> and thus it may be found in prose as much as verse, in music as much as painting. *Poesis* is characterised by a particular, imaginatively mediated, governing pattern of significance calling forth an imaginative response. This imaginative patterning combines the active and passive faculties of the reader or hearer into the form of an attentive receptivity to the poet's communication.<sup>597</sup> This imaginative pattern is a symbol, an aesthetic idea, in the Kantian sense: conceptually indeterminate, and thus neither subjective nor objective purely, the symbol is organically rather than mechanically organised, the meaning of the symbolic or ideal whole being causally irreducible to the sum of its parts.<sup>598</sup>

The imaginatively mediated aesthetic idea is conceived metaphysically by Coleridge in terms of a dynamically constitutive idea of reason – and thus as *natura naturans* or *forma formans*. As J. Robert Barth suggests,<sup>599</sup> such an imaginatively intimated idea enables the reader's participation<sup>600</sup> in the poet's glimpse, or intimation, of a transcendent order of being and meaning, as bound together by imagination in a productive tension, irreducible to either subjective or objective terms, and from which issue all such ontologically structuring polarities as those of activity and passivity, subjectivity and objectivity. In such an organically focused intensity of significance, imagination combines all the faculties of response 'existentially' or holistically, as imagination, itself neither a subjective nor objective power exclusively, is a unifying power, awakening, guiding and honing an attentive receptivity in relation to a particular, but conceptually indeterminate aesthetic pattern, in which universality is thoroughly individuated while still transcending empirical significance.<sup>601</sup>

Such a pattern of meaning, as we have now learned, is an aesthetic idea in the Kantian sense we met in chapter four – a symbol through which the reader participates in the poet's imaginative

<sup>595</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 271, 293-4, 304.

<sup>596</sup> See Coleridge, Lecture 13, 'Lectures on the Principles of Judgement, Culture and European Literature, 1818', in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 2, pp. 217-25.

<sup>597</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 3, 'Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12', in *Lectures on Literature, 1808-1819*, part 1, p. 217.

<sup>598</sup> Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, pp. 257-64 fn.

<sup>599</sup> See J. Robert Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination* (second edition), (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), pp. 30-46.

<sup>600</sup> Participation being conceived, ontologically, as an imaginatively mediated relation which, as transcending while arising from contemplation of the empirical order, (see for example, Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, pp. 69-70), is neither active nor passive purely, as itself a manifestation of the source of both subjectivity and objectivity (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304), and so identifiable with neither exclusively (Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 2, pp. 15-17).

<sup>601</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304; part 2, pp. 15-17.

vision. But for Coleridge, it has a metaphysical significance in a fuller sense than that which Kant allowed to it merely regulatively, or as a guide for ethical contemplation. Regarded as of genuine metaphysical import by Coleridge, the aesthetic idea is as an ontologically constitutive idea of reason: a creatively meaningful power that informs empirical reality.<sup>602</sup>

The aesthetic symbolism involved in the apprehension of an idea of reason should be familiar from our investigation of Kantian aesthetics in chapter four. Since the imagination combines empirical materials and conceptual forms in the apprehension of transcendent symbolic significance, it is known by Coleridge as the 'Unitive' power.<sup>603</sup> Coleridge also coins the terms 'coadunitive' and 'esemplastic' to describe the activity of imagination (thus offering alternative Latinate and Greek neologisms). The meaning of both terms involves the thought of 'shaping into one' (= esemplastic, from the Greek, *eis en plattein*; Coleridge was here influenced by a false etymology of the German term for imagination, *Ein-bildung*).<sup>604</sup> The role of imagination so conceived is to unite the disparate, allowing a higher, organic mode of connection between phenomena to supervene on ordinary awareness. As imaginatively mediated through an aesthetic representation evocative of transcendent principles, an idea of reason is analytically irreducible to terms of causal, mechanical connection. Thus the ideal transcends the power of the empirical understanding, which is based upon the Kantian categories which inform determinate or empirical sensory perception.

Coleridge writes of the evocation of imaginative symbols of ideal transcendence through *poesis* thus:

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other... He diffuses a tone, and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power [...] reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities.<sup>605</sup>

Thus the imagination unites polar oppositions, mediating ideas of reason that are principles of ontological identity in difference. This metaphysical expression signifies that the creative and informing origins of phenomenal appearances are constitutive ideas of reason, unities manifested through the differentiated phenomena that participate in them. Such ideas can be evoked in an imaginatively mediated aesthetic apprehension.<sup>606</sup>

<sup>602</sup> Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, pp. 69-70.

<sup>603</sup> Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, pp. 28-30, appendix C, pp. 69-70.

<sup>604</sup> Coleridge, 'Letter to William Sotheby (1802)', in *Samuel Taylor Coleridge: The Major Works*, H. J. Jackson (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 514; Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 168 and footnote 2.

<sup>605</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 2, pp. 15-18.

<sup>606</sup> Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, pp. 228-30.

Imaginative activity, then, holds opposites together in creative tension: the subjective and the objective, the active and the passive, the ideal and the phenomenal, the universal and the individual. The aesthetic role of imagination is to combine phenomena in such a way as to display the prior, ideal and organic unity in which they participate, from which they derive.<sup>607</sup> In genuine artistic *poesis*, imagination reunites, or suggestively re-combines empirical appearances to intimate a qualitatively unique, and as such conceptually indeterminable and ontologically constitutive whole. Imaginative activity thus manifests organic, ontologically creative ideal unities.<sup>608</sup> Coleridge often emphasises the distinction between distinguishing metaphysically in qualitative terms, and dividing empirically in quantitative terms.<sup>609</sup> Human empirical discursivity can only apprehend qualitatively distinct metaphysical forms through quantitative determination, as the empirical understanding divides sense data into finite phenomena to be analysed and re-combined mechanically by empirical science. The understanding thus translates ideal qualitative distinctness into quantitatively finite phenomenal entities, appearing through the sensible forms of Kantian space and time, the formal intuition of which, as we learned in chapter three, is itself conceptually constructed in terms of the finite transcendental categories of possible empirical experience.

### **(1.5) The distinctions within Coleridgean imagination: primary imagination, secondary imagination and fancy**

Coleridge distinguishes the imagination into primary and secondary roles, as we have seen, and moreover, differentiates both from mere fancy.<sup>610</sup> Fancy is the principle of empirical association of parts of remembered experience, sensory and conceptual, as dealt with by authors such as Hartley and Hume, in the British empirical tradition to which Kant responded.<sup>611</sup> As a principle of empirical association, fancy allows a merely quantitative or aggregative form of combination,<sup>612</sup> as distinct from the qualitatively unique or trans-empirical level of insight afforded by the secondary imagination, as just addressed in the previous subsection.

As we have now seen at some length, secondary imagination, by virtue of the insight it affords into ideal structures of experience, is at work in the aesthetic production and appreciation of art, as well as in the imaginative appreciation of natural beauty. The power manifesting in

<sup>607</sup> Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, pp. 69-70.

<sup>608</sup> 'On the Principles of Genial Criticism', in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Shorter Works and Fragments* 2 parts, H. J. Jackson and R. J. de J. Jackson (ed.), *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* 16 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), vol. 11, part 1, pp. 353-386.

<sup>609</sup> Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, 'Introductory Aphorism XXVI', p. 33; Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 2, p. 11; Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, pp. 18-20.

<sup>610</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.

<sup>611</sup> See, for example, David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, pp. 57-60; for a differentiation between materialistic empiricist conceptions of the association of ideas and an Aristotelian paradigm that subordinates such association to the passivity of the mind, (Coleridge's 'fancy'), under the active sway of intellect and will, see Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 89-112.

<sup>612</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.

secondary imagination is derived from imagination's primary function. Primary imagination, as we are about to discover, is deemed foundational of all possible experience.

Primary imagination thus takes on the role of Kant's transcendental imagination in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.<sup>613</sup> As such, the primary imagination is the ultimate condition of any possible experience, as that which enables the empirical awareness of spatio-temporal continuity, of phenomenal identities enduring through change, as discussed in chapter three in relation to Kant.<sup>614</sup> As indicated above, for contextual reasons that will then become apparent, I will only enter fully into a discussion of some aspects of this epistemologically 'primary' function of the imagination in the next chapter. But the current context of affording the reader a grasp of the overall structure of Coleridge's systematic thought demands that some initial probing of this primary function of the imagination is now called for, to enable us gradually to increase our basic insight into Coleridge's metaphysics before moving on to address his position critically.

What I offer now, taken in relation to what has preceded it, should offer the reader a sufficient grasp of Coleridge's metaphysics to illumine a first foray into the ethical dimension of Coleridge's epistemology in section two, below. There I intend to situate Coleridge's metaphysic in its ethical bearing, as a basis for further discussions in the next chapter. After that, in section three, I will offer a critique of Coleridgean metaphysics from a theological standpoint, in accordance with the plan outlined above in the introduction to this chapter.

#### **(1.6) Primary imagination and epistemology**

We learned above that Coleridge's secondary imagination transcends whilst empowering the provinces of subjectivity and objectivity, in our analysis of the apprehension of ideas of reason. Imaginative activity is thereby shown to be irreducible to either of the poles of experience that it constitutes. Thus we can say that far from being a finite faculty, the imagination, whether considered in its primary or its secondary aspects, has an empirically transcendent and organic structure. On the basis of what we learned in chapters four and five of organic, polar structure, we can see that Coleridgean imagination is thus resistant to any analysis in terms of determinate empirical causality. I will now show how, in its primary aspect or role, the imagination, far from being a merely subjective faculty, is conceived by Coleridge as the ultimate principle of any possible empirical awareness in terms of mechanical combination. Primary imagination can thereby be shown to be the condition on which our everyday awareness ultimately depends.<sup>615</sup> As such, Coleridge's imagination is related to Kant's concept of the transcendental imagination,

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<sup>613</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>614</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.

<sup>615</sup> But note the proviso that the imagination's organic co-dependency in relation to conscience, which, as there indicated, will be explored further in the next chapter.

as we shall see more fully in the next chapter. Indeed, as we have just learned, it is only fancy, the aggregating mechanism at work in the voluntary or unconscious re-combination of finite memories, that has a merely subjective status and role. It should not, therefore, be confused with imagination in either of its aspects.

Concerning the foundational epistemological role of the primary aspect of imagination, then, Coleridge writes as follows: ‘The primary imagination I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM’.<sup>616</sup> This means that everyday experiencing is enabled by our participation in the ontological structure of reason, through the primary transcendental power of imagination. Coleridge builds on Kantian foundations. As we saw in chapter three, Kant similarly shows how the transcendental unity of apperception – that by which there may be objects of empirical experience for its subject – is constructed primarily through the activity of transcendental imagination. For Coleridge, primary imagination’s enabling of possible self-consciousness, and thus objectivity, suggests that its activity is an echo or image of the creative activity of God.

We will see further on that such Coleridgean, imaginatively enabled self-consciousness is itself made dependent on conscience, as Coleridge gives an ethical turn to Kantian epistemology.<sup>617</sup> Importantly, this ethical turn involves an organic relationship between conscience and imagination which appears ultimately paradoxical to the understanding. But can this ethically empowering relationship be shown to harmonise with a Kierkegaardian concept of imaginatively mediated, revelatory paradox? In order for this to be the case, Coleridge must be shown to offer an account which is conceptually irreducible, even to the terms of his dialectical logic of polarity. I shall be drawing predominately negative conclusions in this regard later on in this chapter, but a more positive account will emerge in chapter seven, when we look into the issue more deeply, and from a different perspective.

### **(1.7) The nature of the relationship between primary and secondary imagination**

Similarly to Coleridge’s secondary function of imagination, Kant showed us, in chapter four (in his *Critique of the Power of Judgement*), that ‘nature gives the rule to art’ of genius.<sup>618</sup> We found this to mean that the same transcendental imaginative power that enables conscious apprehension of the phenomenal order of nature (in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) works unconsciously – yet *through* the conscious activity of the artist – in the imaginative ordering of symbolic forms, (aesthetic ideas, which Coleridge renders metaphysically constitutive), as

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<sup>616</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.

<sup>617</sup> Coleridge, ‘Essay on Faith’, in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-844.

<sup>618</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, §57.

intimative of the creative ground of phenomena. Thus Coleridge, as a systematician, can be seen to work in a Kantian aesthetic and epistemological tradition, while dispensing with the merely regulative status Kant accords to the metaphysical intimations mediated by the artistic imagination. Coleridge writes:

The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former [primary imagination], co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealise and to unify. It is essentially vital, even as all objects (as objects) are fixed and dead.<sup>619</sup>

Coleridge then adds that the fancy, as discussed above, ‘has no other counters to play with’ but such empirical ‘fixities and definites’.<sup>620</sup>

### **(1.8) Summary of section one**

We have learned, in the course of discussions in this section, that according to Coleridge, an overarching polarity conditions our ordinary experience of the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity, and that this experiential polarity is enabled by the primary imagination. We have seen also that in its artistic or secondary role, imagination transcends while re-uniting objective and subjective aspects of experience in a qualitatively distinctive appreciation of ideas of reason, as the metaphysically constitutive conditions of phenomenal experience. In relation to the organic nature of imagination, we learned again from Coleridge what we had met before in relation to the thought of the early Schelling, that nature can be regarded as both productive and produced, as empirically finite product, and also as the dynamic, transcendental source of finite experience. In both cases this is explained in terms of a logic of polar or differentiated identity: a logic of reason supervening the logic of the empirical understanding. Coleridge follows Schelling in designating the creative power at work in nature, and that works unconsciously through the activity of artistic imagination *natura naturans*.<sup>621</sup> The phenomenal order is in turn designated *natura naturata* by Coleridge, (as also by Schelling, as we have seen in chapter four). Both writers can be clearly seen to work in a Kantian tradition, while also displaying their own originality.

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<sup>619</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.

<sup>620</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.

<sup>621</sup> Coleridge, *The Friend* part 1, p. 467.

## **(2) Coleridgean Epistemology in its Ethical Bearing: an initial look at the relation of the will and conscience to imagination, on the basis of metaphysical concepts now gained**

A final set of distinctions with regard to the will and conscience will be enough to enable an appreciation of my argument in section three of this chapter, in which I move to a critical discussion of Coleridge's metaphysical system from a broadly Kierkegaardian theological perspective.

### **(2.1) Conscience as an ethico-epistemological, and thus theological principle in Coleridgean metaphysics**

We have learned so far that reason is an ontological principle manifesting through nature and all the faculties of mind. All uses of the mind involve reason and would be impossible without it. Reason's most important function according to Coleridge is ethical, and this importance is both epistemological and theological.<sup>622</sup> But, as we have seen, for Coleridge, there is metaphysical distinction but not division between the mental functions. Thus conscience, while being an ethical imperative, and indeed on the basis of its ethical position, as we shall see, is also regarded by Coleridge as an ultimate condition of self-consciousness, and so of objective knowledge.<sup>623</sup>

It is this combination of epistemological and ethical roles which makes the ethical demand of fidelity to conscience of intrinsic theological significance for Coleridge, as on this epistemological and ethical basis, he can move to a definition of faith as a function or structure of practical reason.<sup>624</sup> Moreover, as Coleridge can envisage no division between reason's practical and theoretical applications, this move allows Coleridge to offer a systematic account of specifically Christian faith in terms of his overarching polar conception of logic.<sup>625</sup> Since reason also grounds the understanding, empirical knowledge would thus also be shown to depend for its possibility on ethical and ultimately theological criteria.

On the basis of what we have learned in previous subsections, we can now see that imagination is essentially the same structure as *natura naturans*: a formative, transcendental principle enabling both subjectivity and the objective phenomenal order.<sup>626</sup> What is to be suggested in what follows is that both in aesthetic discernment of transcendent structure and equally in response to the voice of conscience, imagination may reveal the ethical metaphysical structure

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<sup>622</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44.

<sup>623</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44.

<sup>624</sup> Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, pp. 216-19.

<sup>625</sup> The project of Coleridge's *Opus Maximum*.

<sup>626</sup> Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*, pp. 111, 77; Coleridge begins to identify the two forces of one power – *natura naturans* and imagination – in the interrupted chapter XIII of *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 283-86.



of reality *only through a correct alignment of the will with subsistent reason, as mediated imaginatively*.<sup>627</sup> We can now see how for Coleridge, ontologically constitutive, or subsistent reason, may be equated with the Logos itself, a theological principle through which divine creativity is manifested.<sup>628</sup> The transcendent (or more properly, transcendental) Logos is symbolised (and thus participated in) by the conscience, which means that the conscience indwelling each one of us is an indivisible ontological participation (*pars pro toto*) in the divine mind.<sup>629</sup> As there are no divisions within metaphysical reason, but only distinctions, it follows that conscience is one unified activity. There are not different consciences for each individual, but different individualities in ethical relation to the divine will, whose living symbol is conscience. Conscience is thus the immanence of the Logos: the indivisible presence of God to the conscious mind, as mediated by imagination, as distinct from that same imagination's implicit and unconscious role as *natura naturans*.<sup>630</sup>

It should now be apparent on the basis of our discussion of the aesthetic nature of ideas of reason, as imaginatively apprehended, that it is imagination, as well as working unconsciously as *natura naturans*, that mediates our consciousness of that formative activity in the aesthetic or conceptually indeterminate awareness of constitutive ideas of reason, as structures belonging to the divine mind: the Logos, or formative principle of reality. Through mediating a conscious relationship to the divine mind through the conscious indwelling of the Logos in the symbolic form of conscience, it could be said that imagination makes self-consciousness possible.

And yet we have just found that it is conscience that is said to make self-consciousness possible (and thereby, empirical perception). So what is the relation between conscience (to which the will owes fidelity) and imagination, which, along with conscience, is said to condition the possibility of self-consciousness? As with Kantian imagination, in chapter five, we have come across a paradox or conceptual *aporia*, in which imagination acts as a grounded ground. As will emerge more clearly in the next chapter, conscience and imagination can be thought of as *mutually conditioning*.

## **(2.2) The ethico-poetics of secondary imagination**

Conscience is the voice of reason, the immanence of the divine will as manifest in the Logos. It is the Logos, the Father's own otherness as mediating his ethically creative will, which

<sup>627</sup> Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 216-19.

<sup>628</sup> See Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, pp. 28-9, appendix C, pp. 69-70.

<sup>629</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual* appendix C, pp. 69-72.

<sup>630</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44; Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, pp. 69-72.

symbolically and indivisibly indwells each one of us as conscience.<sup>631</sup> We have learned in a previous subsection that imagination is *esemplastic*, a unifying power.<sup>632</sup> We have also learned that it is the whole human being, in the existential unity of all his powers and functions, that owes fidelity to conscience through the will, as the dynamic principle of rational life in action.<sup>633</sup> Therefore imagination, as a unifying power, must be the vehicle that can bring together the diverse functions of (potential) self-consciousness in order to enable self-consciousness in an act of recognition of, and subordination to, the epistemologically constitutive voice of conscience.<sup>634</sup> J. Robert Barth envisages the relation between faith, conscience and consciousness as portrayed by Coleridge as follows:

The making and perceiving of symbols, in Coleridge's view, always involves a union of subject and object. If there is to be a union of a thinking and willing subject with someone or something outside itself, there must be a commitment of self, involving trust and love as well as knowledge – an act of faith.<sup>635</sup>

This is because faith is a union of the whole man: will, intellect and feeling.<sup>636</sup> Thus Barth, in addressing the poetic practice of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798),<sup>637</sup> can describe the imaginatively mediated participation of the romantic poet's experienced vision of reality, an aesthetic participation in which his audience can share, in terms of what Barth sees as Coleridge's *fiducial* conception of epistemology.<sup>638</sup> Barth writes, quoting Coleridge:

... If symbols ultimately “partake of the reality which they render intelligible” – God – then the only acceptable response to them is a commitment of one's whole self, bringing “the whole soul of man into activity”. [Symbol] is a response to sacrament in an act of faith, and therefore an encounter of the human person with God. There is at work here what in scholastic philosophy is called “mutual causality.” The perception or creation of a symbol [...] depends wholly on the acceptance of the consubstantiality (in Coleridge's sense) of all things [which I have drawn attention to in referring to Coleridge's appeal to metaphysical distinctions which should never be confused with empirical divisions], especially the consubstantiality of God and creation. Only if one accepts, by a kind of act of faith, this consubstantiality, can one create or even perceive a sign that truly partakes of the reality it represents. The commitment of self in faith in this way... is necessary for the perception of symbol *as symbol*, for the creation of symbol *as*

<sup>631</sup> Coleridge, *Essay on Faith*, p. 346; Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, p. 30; Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, p. 13; Mary Anne Perkins, *Coleridge's Philosophy: The Logos as Unifying Principle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 48-9.

<sup>632</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 168-9.

<sup>633</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, pp. 59-70.

<sup>634</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44.

<sup>635</sup> J. Robert Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), p. 39.

<sup>636</sup> See Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44; see also J. Robert Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987), pp. 30-34.

<sup>637</sup> William Wordsworth & Samuel Taylor Coleridge, in William Richie & Daniel Robinson (ed.), *Lyrical Ballads*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002).

<sup>638</sup> Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, pp. 40-1.

*symbol*. At the same time, the reverse is true; perception of the symbol is necessary in order for one to make such a commitment of faith and love; one can commit oneself only to what one somehow already knows.<sup>639</sup>

Barth notes this paradoxical mutual dependency of faith and symbolic insight in connection to Coleridge's poetic practice, which will be dealt with more fully in the next chapter. But what he says is, I suggest, rooted in the original paradox of the epistemological relation between imagination and conscience, as I have described it. My contention is that each mutually conditions the other: there can be no consciousness without subordination of the will to conscience; there can be no recognition of conscience without the activity of imagination in enabling such a recognition by the bringing together of intellect and feeling, in an act of willed subordination in order to a holistic response. Intellect, will and feeling are in a causally unaccountable or organic relationship with conscience, as a condition of possible consciousness which depends on a conscious recognition of its authority to be effective. Much more will be said on this paradoxical epistemological relationship of mutual grounding in the next chapter.

We have found that, for Coleridge, the primary imagination is the condition of the distinction between the self or 'I' and the ego's own alterity, this latter being conscience as the immanence of the Logos, its living symbolic presence to the mind.<sup>640</sup> This initial, ethical polar distinction is foundational of conscious selfhood, as conditioned by the imaginatively mediated unity of mental functions – understanding, will, and feeling.<sup>641</sup> This 'fidelity to our own being'<sup>642</sup> (the act of recognition of conscience) must be an imaginative act, unifying mental functions as self-consciousness, and thereby enabling a personal response to the conscience as the ethical ground of all awareness, as that to which the imaginatively mediated unity of selfhood responds.<sup>643</sup> The imagination is the vehicle of reason, as the medium uniting the self to its own otherness, (i.e. conscience, as the immanence of the Logos, the presence of divine reason to the mind). In this way imagination is seen to be the organ of polar productive power (one power manifesting in two forms).<sup>644</sup> The imagination is thus the medium of organic creativity, uniting that which may be distinguished but never divided (the differentiated identity of bi-polar reality).

The primary imagination enables all possible finite perception, by simultaneously distinguishing and relating opposites, as the medium of polar creative process.<sup>645</sup> As secondary, the imagination indeterminately reunites finite oppositions by forming symbols of creative

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<sup>639</sup> Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, p. 41.

<sup>640</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44; Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304.

<sup>641</sup> Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, pp. 30-4.

<sup>642</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 834.

<sup>643</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44.

<sup>644</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, 226-7.

<sup>645</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44; Coleridge, *Statesman's Manual*, pp. 59-70; Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p.304-6.

ideas, thus mediating those ideas to consciousness through aesthetic awareness.<sup>646</sup> In this way, artistic creativity is an echo of divine creativity.<sup>647</sup> In conditioning possible consciousness, imagination mediates awareness of the differentiated identity of self in polar relation to God as the indwelling voice of conscience.<sup>648</sup> The epistemologically primary act of fidelity to conscience is thus an imaginative act, as an act of the whole person,<sup>649</sup> uniting knowledge, will and feeling in recognition of the authoritative voice of conscience. In this way faith grounds knowledge non-fideistically, because the primary meaning of faith is adherence to practical reason, which is the immanence of personal, subsistent reason, or the Logos,<sup>650</sup> as testified through conscience.<sup>651</sup> The relation of self to conscience as the symbolic immanence of divine alterity could thus be conceived as an ‘I-thou’ relation in its existential bearings,<sup>652</sup> as an act in which the whole man is related to a divine otherness as the condition for him knowing himself and experiencing a world outside him as conditional upon his self-consciousness.

Due to the inextricable way in which conscience and imagination are bound together as a condition of possible self-consciousness, it may be said that *conscience is thus aesthetic in so far as it is ethical, ethical in so far as it is aesthetic*. But in light of criticisms I shall be making later in this chapter of Coleridge’s ethico-epistemology, it will be found that this statement needs considerable qualification. It will emerge in section three that there is a crucial flaw in Coleridge’s presentation of ethico-epistemology, both on philosophical and theological grounds. This issue will be addressed further in the next chapter, in which I will attempt to reclaim the original aesthetic context which gave birth to his theory of imagination. This will involve unfolding the epistemological promise already inherent in Coleridge’s original concept of imagination (which he was later to dub ‘secondary’), as applied to the context of his ethico-epistemology. The ethical nature of Coleridgean imaginative activity, as originally conceived, will be shown in the next chapter to be central to my reconciliation of Kierkegaardian theological concerns with romantic aesthetic activity.

We have learned that at the level of secondary imagination, an act of faith in the meaningfulness of a symbol is crucial for the possibility of its discernment. Coleridge’s secondary imagination emerges as fundamentally an attentiveness to otherness, acting receptively in order to discern justly. Ethically oriented imaginative construal is thus found to be at the heart of symbolic awareness, and its proper functioning is dependent on the responsible comportment of the percipient.

<sup>646</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman’s Manual*, pp. 28-9.

<sup>647</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304-6.

<sup>648</sup> Coleridge, ‘Essay on Faith’, in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44.

<sup>649</sup> Coleridge, ‘Essay on Faith’, in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, p. 844.

<sup>650</sup> Coleridge, ‘Essay on Faith’, in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, p. 844.

<sup>651</sup> Barth, *Coleridge and Christian Doctrine*, pp. 26, 31.

<sup>652</sup> Thomas McFarland’s ‘Prolegomena’ in Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, cxxxvii-cxxxix.

As we discovered in chapter four, Kant had already seen artistic practice and perception as related to ethical activity through the disinterestedness of judgements of beauty, the demand that they be uninfluenced by the self-indulgent desire for sensible or emotional self-gratification. With Coleridge we have come to see that an ethical dimension is fundamental to the proper functioning of imagination in both its primarily epistemological and secondarily aesthetic tasks. We have, moreover, seen that the ethical imaginative energy envisioned by Coleridge as at work in the enabling of empirical and artistic experience alike is significantly related to a Kierkegaardian, existential model of ethical activity: the whole man – thought, feeling and will – uniting through an imaginative response to the authority of conscience.

It should be noted that Coleridge also says that the creation and perception of symbols through secondary imagination occurs when the imagination is set in motion by the will and understanding.<sup>653</sup> And yet it is imagination, as the *esemplastic*, or unitive power that is alone able to unite different polarities of awareness, such as will and understanding. Again, we are confronted with the irreducible paradox of the imagination's organic structure, and thereby its status as a grounded ground of experiential possibilities: as inextricably both active and passive. The imagination, in spontaneous or *active receptivity*, is both follower and leader intrinsically.

We found, similarly, in chapter one that Kierkegaard views human experiencing, or 'inter-esse', as fundamentally a hermeneutical process. We saw in that first chapter that for Kierkegaard, the imaginative mediation or construal necessarily at work in actual experience, as situated between reality and ideality, is in a sense a circular procedure, as subjective and objective facets of experience mutually enrich each other, real life becoming imaginatively 'permeated with consciousness' as possibilities for personal growth or hitherto unperceived options (for example) are discerned, the familiar being made strange by imagination, and glimpsed in a new light.

Similarly, we have seen earlier in this section the suggestion that, for Coleridge, what is presented poetically in a given work can radiate symbolic depth through an act of faith or interpretive commitment. Barth, as we saw, suggests that in Coleridge's romantic poetics, the percipient is enriched by what is symbolically intimated, while the intelligibility of the symbol is contingent upon an imaginative act of faith, in the form of an interpretive openness to the possibility of symbolic insight: an ethico-aesthetic, attentive trust.

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<sup>653</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304-6.

Coleridge writes in the *Statesman's Manual* that the imagination acts in symbolic perception by making the discursive understanding intuitive.<sup>654</sup> The understanding's competence in the categorical sorting and conceptual labelling of superficies, of the sensible surfaces that appear and interact in space and time, is supplemented or given depth in the creation and reception of poetry by an imaginative penetration of linguistic forms, giving them the fullness or 'plenitude of sense': breathing life into them.<sup>655</sup> In this way a poem is only truly read when significant connotations are discovered by imaginatively reading between the lines, as it were. The ethical dimension of imaginative activity again emerges when we realise that such reading between the lines must not be an act of eisegetic distortion of the poetic communication, but rather a trustful and unbiased openness to the possibility of discovering new meaningfulness in attentive contemplation of the poem. Only by attentive receptivity can imagination attain to the activity of symbolic discernment, creative invention and patient discovery thus being organically co-implicated.

### **(2.3) Consolidation of findings so far in sections one and two**

We have found that conscience is conceived by Coleridge as a living symbol of the creative Logos, manifesting the ethical authority of the Father's will, and grounding the symbol-making activity of the secondary imagination. However, we have also found that Coleridgean conscience, as the ground of possible finite perception (an ethicised and therefore constitutive form of Kant's transcendental subjectivity) serves the role provided by intellectual intuition in Schelling's *Transcendental Idealism*, as an imaginatively mediated principle and vehicle of the identity in difference of ideality and reality (Divine reason and human will), as of its philosophical explanation in terms of the polar logic of Coleridge's metaphysical system. For theological reasons, drawn from chapters one, two and four, we have found that such a totalising scheme of logical determination is incompatible with a genuine account of Christian revelation.

The possibility of self-consciousness and objective awareness is shown by Coleridge to be rooted in the relation of two wills, human and divine, as conceived in terms of an all-encompassing, bi-polar or dialectical logic of identity in difference. On the basis of what has been found out so far, we can begin to see that this logic of differentiated identity implies that Coleridge's system, like that of Hegel (as we found in chapter one, as addressed from a Kierkegaardian theological perspective), can be described as panentheistic. This means that Coleridge's system is transcendently conceived in terms of the overarching conceptual

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<sup>654</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, p. 69.

<sup>655</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, p. 69.

mediation of polar distinctions, which will be shown in section three to be based upon an all-encompassing and impersonal concept of reality, rather than according to Kierkegaard's conception of an infinite gulf or division between infinity and finitude.

The Kierkegaardian gulf is made by human sinfulness, and is thus an existential gulf pervading every aspect of life as we actually live it, a gulf that is manifest in the very way we exist and relate to the world around us, and that cannot therefore be bridged *within thought* by the conceptual manipulations of polar logic. Such an existential gulf can only be bridged by a subjective response to the saving grace of a revelation conceived as an absolute paradox, and a stumbling block to reason.

However, we have also seen, through Ferreira, that Kierkegaard's subjective relation to this unthinkable paradox *does* involve imaginative activity from the side of human receptivity, and that while logic cannot bridge the gulf between human and divine, there is at work in the appropriation of the fruits of revelation a paradoxical or conceptually irreducible imaginative order which can never be adequately accounted for in logical terms, but which shows the needfulness of aesthetic activity to the human reception of Christ's paradoxical revelation. In the next and final chapter it is this theme from chapter two that will be picked up once again, in relation to the non-systematic aesthetic thought and poetic practice of Coleridge. In addressing the ethical nature of Coleridge's aesthetic practice, I hope to reconcile Kierkegaard to the artistic implications of his own practice of indirect theological communication, which is the primary intention running through the development of my whole thesis.

Firstly, though, I must turn to the negative findings just high-lighted, in order to engage critically with Coleridge's systematic philosophical theology according to the Kierkegaardian theological criteria that are normative for this thesis as a whole.

### **(3) A Critique of Coleridgean Metaphysics According to Temporal-Philosophical and Theological Criteria: the impossibility of genuine revelational alterity within a totalising, systematic metaphysical construction**

At the end of our survey, it should be evident that concepts of dynamic process, qualitative significance and imaginative polar productivity are closely interrelated, for Coleridge, while the tendency of his systematic presentation is towards a panentheistic position, such as we saw Kierkegaard attacking on theological grounds in chapter one. In light of these findings, I now move to a critical, theologically motivated appreciation of the implications of Coleridge's metaphysical system.

In this section, I will be taking Thomas McFarland's approach as a general guideline,<sup>656</sup> but relating his argument to my own criticisms of Coleridge's overarching conception of reality in terms of a dialectic of actuality and potentiality, or the reality of relative non-being, in an Aristotelian sense.<sup>657</sup> In his *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, McFarland argues convincingly that finite freedom is impossible within a pantheistic system, of which I shall show Coleridgean panentheism to be a variant, as should become clear as we proceed in this final section. I shall argue that in Coleridge's metaphysical system, the genuine personal freedom of God and human being is in effect denied because of Coleridge's use of a meontological dialectical logic, based upon a doctrine of potential or relative non-being (Greek: *me on*), as shall be explained below.

I argue that such a meontologically grounded divinity, as one supposedly creating extra-divine reality out of his own eternal potentialities – which are given the systematic status of a conceptual *a priori* – is not a God able to bring about genuinely new events, and that in such a situation, genuine revelatory alterity or 'un-pre-thinkability' – as that which one could not in principle have given to oneself, from immanent human resources – becomes impossible.<sup>658</sup> This is because of the nature of Coleridge's systematic logic. I submit, on the basis of my findings in chapters four and five, that such a transcendental logical scheme is implicitly dependent on a Kantian or 'spatialised' conception of time. It is this teleological pre-setting of the path and outcome of thought that serves as the true originating principle or *arche* of the system which it drives. Coleridge's systematic account of God is in effect a mere logical construct, subordinated to the logic governing his speculative thought.

### **(3.1) Coleridge, teleological time and the process of transcendent aesthetic intimation**

It will emerge in the rest of this chapter and the next that I hold the genuineness of any given metaphysical insight of Coleridge's to be assessable according to the extent to which he does *not* achieve a fully-rounded, systematic completeness of form in its presentation. I shall remind the reader of why this is the case, as based on my reasoning in chapters four and five.

A link between the Coleridgean romanticism to be addressed in the next chapter and Kierkegaardian thought, will be shown to be the shared sense of a more-than-empirical, but less than complete *intimation* of a fullness of metaphysical or theological significance. I suggest

<sup>656</sup> Thomas McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

<sup>657</sup> Technical terms will be explained as they arise in the course of treatment.

<sup>658</sup> The literal incalculability of genuine revelation, as that which one could not in principle have given oneself has been signposted as a prominent theme in earlier chapters, notably in addressing Kierkegaardian paradoxical revelation in chapters one and two, and in relation to a theologically oriented critique of Kantian organicism and temporality in terms of Bergsonian temporal process conceived as duration, in chapter 4.



that such romantic or existential ‘metaphysics’ – whatever other differences there may be – always remains a perspective: an aesthetically mediated, as conceptually indeterminate, intimation of ungraspable wholeness. I suggest further that the confidence with which such self-confessedly tentative or temporary positions are put forward discloses a crucial awareness of the centrality of time in conditioning human experience. As we exist, time is both our limitation and our field of possibility. This temporal dimension will be important to bear in mind in reading the rest of this chapter, as my argument is motivated by the distinction between a kind of qualitatively evolving ‘lived time’, that we have already learned about from Bergson, and a mode of *a priori* systematic philosophical thought working to a pre-set schedule, in the form of a teleological trajectory: a discontinuous, since essentially spatial, reconstruction of time for the sake of its calculative usefulness for explanatory completeness, as we learned in the last two chapters.

I will be claiming, in the next chapter, that Coleridge, as a poet and in his aesthetic contemplations, achieves the kind of incomplete metaphysical vision I have just been speaking of: the partial vision or intimation of an overarching context of creativity over and above, yet pulsing through, the empirical, mechanical order. Coleridge the philosophical poet entertains such a vision through the openness to insight of imaginative receptivity, but does not try to claim it as a possession, or absolute purchase-point. Such a demonstrable *arche* amounts to the existentially impossible ‘view from nowhere’ which Coleridge claims in his systematic presentation, as we saw earlier, and shall investigate further below, in the light of my current remarks. Moreover, I will argue that Coleridge, even as a systematic philosopher, had this same vision before him. As primarily a creative thinker, he worked on the basis of a guiding intimation of the result at which he aimed, as afforded to him aesthetically, through faith. But I submit in what follows that this imaginative insight could not survive his attempt to reduce it, teleologically, to the strictly objective terms of *a priori* conceptual determination.

I thus interpret Coleridge as a thinker who spent his activity as an *a priori* systematician vainly trying to play ‘catch-up’ with his aesthetically indeterminate vision. But nevertheless, even if he did fail as a systematician, Coleridge never shied away from, or attempted to fudge his conceptual dilemmas. He remained as true to his faith in personal freedom as to his belief in the power of philosophy to accommodate this commitment. I suggest, however, that the conceptual resources available to him necessarily led – albeit unintentionally – to a compromised presentation of his Christian faith. I argue, in short, that the very systematicity of Coleridge’s

thinking is structurally inappropriate to the theological ends for which it is directed and set in motion, by the living unison of his faith and his poetic vision.<sup>659</sup>

I would suggest, on the basis of arguments in previous chapters, that this theoretical impasse is fundamentally rooted in the question of time. Coleridge is, perhaps unwittingly, trying to translate his ‘durational’ imaginative experience into the logical trajectory of a post-Kantian, spatialised teleology. This amounts to a distortion of the very experience to which Coleridge seeks to do justice, leading to his perception of a fissure between Christian faith and poetic vision. While both these aspects were organically linked in his life, Coleridge struggled to formalise their dynamic inter-play in philosophical terms, owing to his repeated attempts to translate or schematise an aesthetically dynamic and evolving vision into objectively systematic teleology.

Thus the argument in what follows is informed by the reading of Kierkegaard earlier in this thesis. It is based on the notion that by pre-setting a theoretical agenda through the schematic reconstruction of aesthetic experiential process in terms of polar logic, Coleridge tries to pin down the living, creative processes in nature; processes that are for him intimative of divinity. Coleridge tries to plot this free creativity, or divine grace, on a spatialised and thus essentially a-temporal map through the use of dialectical logic. He thus works with a teleological plan, involving the projection of a threefold pattern or schematic template of ‘development’ that cannot evolve qualitatively, being, by its very nature, a schema quantifiable or calculable in advance. Thus I argue that Coleridge’s systematic thinking could not truly be reconciled with his faith or with his poetic vision, as both were born of a unique human freedom in relation to the unpredictably spontaneous love of a personal God

### **(3.2) The theological problem of Coleridge’s systematised epistemology**

As Kierkegaard points out, and as we saw in chapters one and two, a truly divine revelation is a personal encounter with the one who alone can save us existentially, which must inevitably take the form of a conceptual paradox to determinate conceptual thought, as a revelation of the one who gives us what we cannot always already have given to ourselves, from out of our own conceptual resources. The true ‘god’ of such a system as Coleridge’s,<sup>660</sup> is the logic empowering it, which must thus be regarded as a thought-idol from a Kierkegaardian theological perspective. I suggest that only a doctrine of creation *ad extra* out of absolute non-being (or *ouk on*) safeguards an account of divine creative and redemptive freedom. Coleridge

<sup>659</sup> I owe much of the insight in this paragraph to McFarland’s meditations throughout his *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*.

<sup>660</sup> Coleridge’s system, like Hegel’s – as criticised by Kierkegaard – aims in effect to ground a *conception* of divinity within a systematic worldview, or theoretical product of the human mind, and thus what is ultimate in such a project is the standard set by human logic, not any putative revelatory encounter. It is in this sense of false ultimacy that I apply the term ‘thought idol’ in the text at this point.

seeks to do justice to two conflicting impulses in his systematic work: the impulse to a totally reticulated explanatory scheme, which involves the thought idolatry I have been referring to, and a deep personal commitment to human ethical freedom of response to a personal divine approach. McFarland, as I shall now illustrate, provides cogent reasons for the necessary failure of Coleridge's project to argue consistently for divine and human freedom within the terms of a logically necessary, or *a priori* scheme of metaphysical explanation.

McFarland points out that objects are always found only in epistemic relation to a knowing subject.<sup>661</sup> Subjectivity and objectivity are thus always in polarity, but the 'I am' position always has actual epistemological priority over the 'it is': the thinker over his thought.<sup>662</sup> To illustrate the particular *impasse* facing the objective metaphysician, McFarland points out that even Spinoza's metaphysical substance – an objectively conceived pantheistic totality that swallows up all difference within itself, or to which all otherness, including human being, can be reduced through the logical steps of a geometrically modelled procedure – is, existentially, still the freely willed conception of substance of the man, Spinoza, existing and acting intentionally and independently of the closed system of the thought that he originated.<sup>663</sup> This means that the thinker whose starting point is metaphysical objectivity will always confront the insurmountable difficulty – in any consistent and rigorous argument, at least – of accounting for his own status as an intentional thinker and agent. There can be no place for the philosopher's own personal experience of free agency and independent thought within the rigid reticulation of his metaphysics.

Coleridge, as McFarland documents in some detail, was himself aware of this situation, and consciously strove to 'place existence before being' in light of his commitment to personal freedom.<sup>664</sup> However Coleridge was unable to find a way consistently to achieve systematic explanatory completeness while preserving ethical freedom, and thereby do full justice to his contradictory motivations.

Within the epistemological relationship of thinker and thought, subject and object, philosophers can either choose to start their conceptual development from the objective side, like Spinoza, in which case personal freedom will be lost, or from a conception of subjective freedom, in which case systematic closure will not be possible. The subjective theoretical *aporia* is illustrated by

<sup>661</sup> McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, p. 244.

<sup>662</sup> Coleridge himself perceived this in a letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1815, as McFarland documents: McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, p. 244.

<sup>663</sup> Spinoza tries to 'soften the blow' by attributing to individual entities a certain *conatus essendi*, or ability to persevere in a relative distinctness and cohesive integrity of being. How far this is in accord with his aim for strictly geometrical deduction, however, is certainly at least open to question. See Spinoza's *Ethics*, Andrew Boyle (tr.) (London: J. M. Dent, 1993), pp. 52-3, 90-1, 123, 144-5, 153-6, 174-5, 272, 276, 278, 281-3.

<sup>664</sup> McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, p. 244.

Descartes' need to invoke a *deus ex machina* to ensure the independent reality of thought-objects. While selfhood is dissolved in objective constructions, both physiological and metaphysical, solipsism is a looming spectre for the subjectively grounded metaphysician. The solipsistic problem can be avoided only by the acceptance of a dualistic split between subject and object that cannot be conclusively bridged through logical deduction, and which demands what amounts to an act of faith in an independent world outside of subjectively founded systematic thought.<sup>665</sup>

It is in this latter sense that systematic completeness is deemed impossible for the thinker whose starting point is subjectivity, according to McFarland. We have seen in the previous section that according to Coleridge's ethicised epistemology, the subject's self-awareness, and thus his awareness of objective reality, depends on a self-'other-ing' that is the ego's freely willed self-subordination, in recognition of the authority of conscience over its activities. Coleridge thus wants to commence his thinking on what McFarland dubs the subjective side of the overarching epistemological relation. Coleridge would *appear*, as we saw above, to be arguing from the initial postulation of a human freedom actualised through personal relatedness to a freely creating divine otherness. The conscience is held to be the active symbol whereby a morally responsible creature participates in the divine creative intention. It is in and as this participative response, as the recognition of the authority of that ethical intention *as intrinsic to, but not straightforwardly identical with one's sense of self*, that self-consciousness is enabled. But it is just this dialectical relationship – this *differentiated identity* linking self and conscience – that is problematic from a theological point of view, and now I will show how.

According to Coleridge's ethical epistemology, the ego responds to conscience as a 'thou': the subject's own otherness. In this relationship, as Coleridge points out in his *Essay on Faith*, sameness, or straightforward identity, is negated in the subject's recognition of an authoritative otherness immanent within consciousness – the divine immanence of reason in the form of conscience. Coleridge explains his complex ethico-epistemology as follows. He writes that the intimate personal pronoun, 'thou', is conditional to the possibility of objective self-consciousness, because

[...] the third person could never have been distinguished from the first but by means of the second. There can be no He without a previous Thou. Much less could an I exist for us, except as it exists during the suspension of the will, as in dreams; and the nature of brutes may be best understood by considering them as somnambulists. This is a deep meditation, though capable of the strictest proof, namely that there can be no I without a Thou, and that a Thou is only possible by

<sup>665</sup> McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, p. 303.

an equation in which I is taken as equal to Thou, and yet not the same. And this, again, is only possible by putting them in opposition as corresponding opposites, or correlatives.<sup>666</sup>

Here Coleridge is pointing to the internal relatedness, the intrinsic mutual inseparability that is simultaneously the condition for reciprocating diversity within any polarity. Negativity derives its significance in the relationship of contrast with positivity, just as light is inconceivable without darkness, or north without south. These are polarities, and the paradigmatic exemplar of polarity, for Coleridge, is self and other, but the otherness must be in the form of another selfhood, not the third person relation, in which another self is merely the object for a subject's thought. Only another 'I' can make personal demands upon selfhood. It is only with another self that a moral relation directly pertains. Only it is not yet the selfhood of another human being that is referred to by Coleridge as decisive for the possibility of self-awareness, as is the case in Martin Buber's thinking,<sup>667</sup> rather it is the far closer relationship of self and conscience (in Latin *con-scientia* – the knowledge which I know together with another, a mutual knowing).

Already we can see that on the one hand, Coleridge, like Buber is deeply concerned about the possibility of true ethical relationship, while on the other, we can see that his utilisation of the logic of polar relationship, or differentiated identity, will mean that the relationship between self and other – remembering that in this epistemologically primordial case, the otherness concerned is the immanence of God himself, as the authority with which conscience is imbued – is logically calculable. It has been a theme throughout my thesis, and in relation to Coleridge's systematic thought, that any theology which subsumes God under a conceptual scheme denies ultimacy to God's freedom reveal himself in salvific judgement, and thereby effectively places its real faith in the power of human thought. One might suggest that this is more a wish-fulfilment strategy than a genuine theological response to revelation.

In order to explain the possibility of self-consciousness, and thus also an objective knowledge of the world, Coleridge, as we have just seen, makes selfhood and the divine authority of conscience polar opposites, or correlates. His account continues by explaining how the underlying identity of the two correlates – 'I' and 'Thou' – is noted and yet qualified by the ego:

In order to this, a something must be affirmed in the one, which is rejected in the other, and this something is the will. I do not will to consider myself as equal to myself, for in the very act of constructing myself *I*, I take it as the same, and therefore as incapable of comparison, that is, of any application of the will. If then, I minus the will be the thesis; Thou plus will must be the antithesis, but the

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<sup>666</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, p. 837.

<sup>667</sup> McFarland's 'Prolegomena' in Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, p. cxli.

equation of Thou with I, by means of a free act, negating the sameness in order to establish the equality, is the true definition of conscience. But as without a Thou there can be no You, so without a You no They, These, or Those; and as all these conjointly form the materials and subjects of consciousness, and the conditions of experience, it is evident that conscience is the root of all consciousness –, *a fortiori*, the precondition of all experience, – and that the conscience cannot have been in its first revelation deduced from experience.<sup>668</sup>

Coleridge thus defends a concept of ethical freedom in response to an authoritative ethical will. The two wills, finite and infinite, are conceived in a relation of differentiation or mutual antithesis, as predicated upon underlying identity.

### **(3.3) The theological problem of Coleridge's systematic meontology**

In the *Opus Maximum*, Coleridge extends this initial postulation of moral freedom. This extension is in order to deepen, while making explicit, the grounding of human ethical freedom in a creaturely relation to divine omnipotence, about which more will be said later.<sup>669</sup> As ethical, relationship to the creator thus conceived ought to be freely willed, with the divine freedom to create in love on the one hand, and the human freedom to respond to divine love on the other.

As we have seen, McFarland holds that any such metaphysic as Coleridge's intends to be, as one which takes its starting point in subjective freedom in relation to a freely creating and loving God, should be necessarily dualistic in form, if argued consistently.<sup>670</sup> Similarly, Colin Gunton writes that any attempt to elide this dualism of God in relation to a separate creation *ad extra*, and thus any attempt to move away from a traditional and orthodox scheme of creation *ex nihilo* (where 'nothing' is conceived in terms of absolute non-being or *ouk on*), cannot but collapse the real alterity implied and respected in all genuinely ethical personal relationships.<sup>671</sup> We have just seen that Coleridge trespasses on the existential integrity of the 'I'/'Thou' relationship by translating both 'I' and 'Thou' into objective counters within an overarching scheme of logical mediation. I shall next be arguing that Coleridge is indeed logically consistent, but that in conceiving the relation between transcendent creator and creation in terms of conceptual mediation, he is in effect consistent with McFarland's objective metaphysical starting point. Creation *ex nihilo* thus becomes the mediation whereby a concept of reality – which is conceived as common to both creator and creation – is mediated through a polar account of actuality and potentiality, or relative non-being.

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<sup>668</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44.

<sup>669</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 215-47.

<sup>670</sup> McFarland, *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition*, pp. 55-6.

<sup>671</sup> Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 23-5, 202-3.

I offer the following quotation from his *Opus Maximum* as evidence that Coleridge utilises a concept of dialectical or merely relative non-being, (*me on*). Here non-being is not absolute, but is conceived as potentiality, or the reciprocal pole or antithesis of actuality, as mutually related through an underlying and all-encompassing concept of reality:

I [...] refer to the false division which has so long prevailed in the methods of philosophy under the name of Dichotomy, in which the position always begins with two, a thing and its opposite. Thus we should have the real, and as its opposite and co-ordinate the un-real or non-entity, that is, an opposition in which there can be no opposite. If, on the other hand, we took the real as the pregnant uninvolved point and the identity of both opposites, and these opposites again as the two poles of the line into which the point produces itself, or into which it unfolded in order to manifest its being, we should see clearly that both alike are forms of that point, and that, therefore, under the idea reality we have to find two opposites, both of which are reality, though each a form opposite to the other. These forms, these opposite poles of reality, are the actual and the potential [...].<sup>672</sup>

Here it is clear that Coleridge's works from a logically nuanced and objective concept of reality, that is capable of conceptual determination through the related antitheses of polar logic. Reality, evolving through a dialectic of actuality and potentiality, is the principle of Coleridge's philosophy, and not the free self-revelation of the God of Christianity.

Coleridge would doubtless object that his 'reality' is not a concept, but a Platonic form or idea of reason. But it is clear that Coleridge, on his own evidence (as we are about to see), necessarily has no choice but to utilise concepts of the *understanding* in the so-called 'higher' or productive logic of dialectical *reason*. And this is simply because there just is no other way to express oneself linguistically – except, of course, through imaginative conceptual indeterminacy, or as Kierkegaard practices it, communicative indirection. Coleridge, however, as well as being a poet and aesthetician, has a powerful drive towards systematic metaphysics; and if he is to be a systematic metaphysician, then he must use logic; and logic, whether dichotomous or dialectical, can only forge conceptually determinate chains of linguistic argument.

Coleridge is, of course, thoroughly aware of this:

The Practical Reason alone is Reason in the full and substantive sense. It is reason in its own sphere of *perfect freedom*; as the source of *IDEAS*, which Ideas, in their conversion to the responsible Will, become Ultimate Ends. On the other hand,

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<sup>672</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, p. 226-7.

Theoretic Reason, as the ground of the Universal or Absolute in all logical *conclusion* is rather the *Light* of Reason in the *Understanding*, and known to be such by its contrast with the contingency and particularity which characterise all the proper and indigenous growths of the Understanding.<sup>673</sup>

The logical method of determining the ideal – a term which is used in an *improper* sense in such a theoretical context, according to Coleridge's own testimony just cited – is utilised throughout Coleridge's more systematic writings, but often contrasts strongly with his approach to the ideal in relation to aesthetics, as shall become apparent in chapter eight, below. Moreover, Coleridge in the passage just quoted will allow that only practical or *ethical* ideas are manifestations of reason in the 'full and substantive' sense of the term, ascribing to them a sphere of 'perfect freedom'. This also harmonises with what we shall learn of Coleridge's poetic insights, which always move towards the ethical, but unlike what Kierkegaard would chastise as the illusory movement of Coleridge's theoretical dialectic, such movement takes the form of a real and progressive development through the felt duration of living experience. We shall also see that when treated aesthetically, in poetry and commentary, receptivity to the ideal demands imaginative interpretation through an indeterminate use of concepts of the understanding, in response to a quasi-Kantian free-play of the imagination.

On the basis of the passage of ontological dialectic cited above, I am claiming that a dialectical concept of reality functions as the true ultimate principle in Coleridge's system, and not the trinitarian God made known through a tradition of theological reflection on the Christian community's revelatory experience, as constitutive of the life of the church. Coleridge has replaced a traditional theological concept of divine creation from absolute non-being (*ouk on*) – a safeguard of freedom, divine and human – with a dialectically driven account of the actualisation of creatures from the prior reality of potentiality, conceived as divine power. As we have seen that this procedure is inconsistent with any philosophy or theology that would remain rooted in freedom. But, we have also seen that Coleridge has already elided or compromised his account of freedom, through the dialectical logic of his epistemological starting point. Coleridge's elision of freedom is thus homologous with his elision of the distinction between transcendence and creation. Infinite divine actuality and finite creation, or divinely actualised potentiality, are merely degrees of differentiation along an identical and underlying continuum of reality, common to both poles, and this underlying reality is a concept as objective and all inclusive as Spinoza's substance. This is apparent in Coleridge's account of creation through dialectical non-being in his *Opus Maximum*:<sup>674</sup>

<sup>673</sup> S. T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*, p. 469. Coleridge's italics.

<sup>674</sup> Here Coleridge is influenced both by Schelling's *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, Jeff Love & Johannes Schmidt (tr.) (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) and the theosophy of Jacob Boehme (see Boehme's 'Mysterium Pansophicum' in 'Supplementary Texts', *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*).



Then, contemplating the power not indeed as the [divine] Will but yet as a power of the Will, and therefore as a causative power, we give birth in our minds to an idea which is not the same as that which we express with the verb substantive “*Is*”, though it is implied in the great I AM and it is that which we express by the word “*Have*” [...]. For who would hesitate to admit that God hath an infinite power, and that in the fullness of his Wisdom and Love, he produces what could not be save in him, but which he is not. Now such are all beings that are not absolutely God [...].<sup>675</sup>

[T]herefore we speak of *the ground or the nature of the Deity* [the ground is the manifestation, as potentiality, of the continuum I speak of above as an underlying concept of reality, of which actuality and potentiality are poles].<sup>676</sup>

The ground [i.e., potentiality in God: the power that God has, the condition for his essence, but not identical with it] is not to be called God, much less God the Father; it is the abysmal depth (*βυθος ἀβυσσος*) of the eternal act by which God alone as the *causa sui* affirmeth himself eternally.<sup>677</sup>

The difference between Spinoza and Coleridge is that the latter works with a dynamic rather than a static concept of logic. But we have seen, in chapter one, in Kierkegaard’s criticism of Hegelian dialectical logic, that while polarities undoubtedly exist in nature, the logical extrapolation from such antitheses,<sup>678</sup> far from driving the reality of movement, merely introduces a certain fluidity into thought.

Coleridge longs to retain freedom, divine and human, and have total explanatory clarity, but he ends by compromising both freedoms, infinite and finite, in terms of an underlying and polar logical necessity. In sum, as McFarland contends, Coleridge loses hold of the ethical relationality which he so prizes for the sake of the explanatory completeness of a conception of the divine-human relationship in terms of a polarisation of being through related difference. Thus in Coleridge’s thinking, finite and infinite personhood become two poles – active and receptive, creating and created – of the one overarching reality. That concept of reality is then itself polarised, potentiality being conceived in primordial relationship to its polar antithesis: actuality. Creation is thus thought in terms of divine omnipotence, or the creative power that God has, as distinct from the self-existent actuality which God is.<sup>679</sup> God thus creates ‘otherness’ out of his own omnipotence or relative non-being, (*me on*), which is conceived by

<sup>675</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 231-2. Coleridge’s italics.

<sup>676</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, p. 232. Emphasis added.

<sup>677</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 232.

<sup>678</sup> For example, positive and negative electrical charges and magnetic poles.

<sup>679</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 231-2.

Coleridge in the *Opus Maximum* as the condition of possibility for any existence extrinsically related to divine self-subsistent actuality.

As Colin Gunton points out, given a monistic logical scheme such as Coleridge's, in which polar or dialectical logic serves as the ultimate principle and unifying vehicle of all further conceptual developments, creation will not have any genuine alterity from the Creator, as lacking a requisite space of freedom from, and for, God.<sup>680</sup> Any genuine ethical relationship, and by extension, any truly revelatory, and thus ethically transformational communication between creator and creature will become impossible, as that which is existentially salvific, that which we truly need to be revealed to us, must necessarily be beyond our human conceptual resources, as we have discovered Kierkegaard to have perceived in chapters one and two.

#### **(4) Concluding Remarks and Forecast**

In the last section I have suggested that Coleridge, by means of his dialectical logic, has surrendered ultimate theological criteria in the form of concepts of divine and human freedom in exchange for a scheme of logical mediation.

I have reason to argue, however, on the strength of evidence that I shall be presenting in the next chapter, that Coleridge might well have a genuine claim to aesthetic insight into what he terms ideas of reason, but rather in the form of creative structures somehow irradiating an appropriately receptive imaginative discernment, than in the form of structures of metaphysical logic. Thus I shall be suggesting that the true theological value of Coleridge's thought should be sought in his aesthetic output, rather than in his systematisation of these fragmentary insights or intimations of transcendence, as translated into the logical determinations of post-Kantian transcendental metaphysics.

In chapters four and five, we found that Bergsonian duration provided us with a framework through which to assess the possible genuineness of any such claims to aesthetic revelatory insight. We found that only a philosophy taking account of the intrinsically qualitative nature of temporal flow (rather than the habitual experience of quantitative or 'spatialised' clock-time) might guide us in an analysis of the conditions under which any theologically significant, genuinely revelatory discernment might arise. I aim to show in the next chapter that the aesthetic comportment under which such an experience of time may be entertained, as discussed in chapter five, is in fact also an ethical, existential comportment. If such an evolving experience can be genuinely associated with Coleridgean poetic and aesthetic experience, then a

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<sup>680</sup> Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, pp. 23-5, 202-3.

reconciliation of Kierkegaardian existential faith and artistic activity, or what was referred to in chapter two as 'outward imagination', may be possible.

Such a reconciliation would achieve the aim with which I set out in chapters one and two, namely, to provide an ethico-existential model that might account for Kierkegaard's theological poetics of indirect communication in terms acceptable to his conception of the existential sphere of paradoxical faith, in which I could find no opening provided for the outward imaginative activity which Kierkegaard himself practiced in the name of such faith.



## VII

### **Coleridge's biblical romanticism and Kierkegaardian faith**

#### **Introduction and Recapitulation**

In the last chapter, we were able to build on the position arrived at earlier in relation to Bergson's criticism of Kant's 'spatialised' conception of time. At bottom, it is this distinction between a dynamic as opposed to a static conception of time, as we shall see in more detail as we proceed towards a conclusion, that justifies my distinction between Coleridge the philosopher-poet, and Coleridge the systematician. Since this current chapter will need to build on the findings of the last, this may be a good point at which to pause and re-trace the path that has been followed in reaching this important, temporal criterion.

In chapter four, we saw that Bergson's concept of duration shares notable structural similarities with Schelling's post-Kantian re-conceptualisation of the Kantian 'thing-in-itself' as a dynamic principle to be philosophically intuited. Bergson's concept of philosophical intuition, like Schelling's, reveals the need of an imaginative mediation of metaphysical insight. In Bergson, as in Schelling, aesthetic discrimination through imaginative participation in nature's organic process is the medium and source of such philosophical intuition. But a key difference between ontological process as conceived by Bergson on the one hand – intrinsically unpredictable both progressively and retroactively – and its idealist, teleological interpretation on the other was emphasised, and said to have important theological implications for the course of my thesis.

We have now seen the application of those implications in the results of the last chapter. There we utilised those earlier findings to provide the criterion by which Coleridge's theologically significant poetic and critical insights, which I shall be introducing in what follows, could be separated from the procrustean teleology of his systematic philosophy, which, I have suggested, tends effectually to cancel out the real significance of Coleridge's aesthetic thinking, as lost sight of through the tendency of his systematic work to pre-determine the ontologically ideal as a fixed, pre-set goal.

In this chapter I intend to put forward the other half of the story by showing how the full theological promise of Coleridge's focal philosophical thoughts only emerges under the very different light which his less formally deductive contemplations in notebooks, poetry, and aesthetic writings shines upon them. My contention is that, freed from the straitjacket of an

post-Kantian systematic framework that seems ultimately alien to his personal religious convictions and creative outlook, these same philosophical models are transformed.

I suggest that the theological possibilities inherent in Coleridge's central terms, as introduced at the beginning of the last chapter – (for example, the essential temporality and thus 'unfinished-ness' of the manifestation of an aesthetic idea, as an imaginatively mediated event) – were often frustrated and under-exploited, owing to the inevitable strain imposed by his attempt to master a conceptual system that always tends to panentheism in his search for an overarching viewpoint.<sup>681</sup> I submit that the pretensions of such metaphysical 'hubris' hold Coleridge's best thoughts captive; in a sense, it is as if the richness of Coleridge's thinking as regards imagination and symbolism could only come into full play when he wrote in a more ethically receptive frame of mind, taking up an imaginative and *willing receptiveness* in relation to the objects of his contemplation.

We saw that while Coleridge-the-systematician prioritises an organic dialectic of progressive and polar interactivity over a merely mechanical concept of causality, his concept of the organic, derived from Kant, leads him to explain the manifestation of aesthetic ideas according to a predetermining, dialectical pattern of final causality. This teleological interpretation has been shown in chapters four and five to be dependent on an inadequate account of time, long prevalent in the tradition, but made explicit by Kant.

By following Kant, Coleridge the system-builder's conception of time does not account for time's central property: that it flows. As shown in discussing Bergson, determinate conceptuality fails to account for time itself, translating its essential movement into a static enumeration of stopping-points along a line, a pathway drawn by the mind in terms of space.<sup>682</sup> This conceptual spatialisation of time literally excludes the reality of change – the reality of the mind's evolving experience that enables it to draw the 'time'-line at all. Any measurable 'succession' of fixed points along a line is, in itself, as immobile as the individual frames in a strip of film without the motion leant them by the extrinsic spooling of a film projector.<sup>683</sup> The experienced quality of change entirely eludes such a quantifying conceptual procedure, which, as essentially deterministic, is powerless to deal with the dynamics of free volition. With the reality of freedom excluded from systematic conceptual accounts, the possibility of any genuine distinction between right and wrong vanishes: if there can be a theoretical accounting only of

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<sup>681</sup> See Kathleen Coburn's concluding remarks, quoting Barfield, in Coburn, *Experience into Thought*, pp. 84-5. The import of these pages is that Coleridge's subtle and acute awareness of the poignant reality of his own existential contradictions means that his metaphysical concern for a unitive view of diversity in terms of living, healing wholeness is far more to him than merely a theoretical conundrum; that what his philosophical investigations are motivated by is primarily a profoundly intimate and often painful, yet creative self-questioning – infinite in its implications – of what it means to be a human being.

<sup>682</sup> For further elucidation of my thinking with regard to the dynamics of time, please see appendix three, below.

<sup>683</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, 320-23.

what has to be, questions of what should or should not be are relegated to a category of illusory appearances.

Coleridge believes himself to be saved from such a Schellingian/Spinozistic denial of genuine human freedom only by a personal theological interpretation of the significance of conscience, which he postulates as the foundation of his system. Yet following McFarland, this foundation has been shown to be unconvincing, as dependent on an overarching and pre-determining logical principle. But I have suggested that Coleridge's personal faith does genuinely guide the imaginatively driven philosophical reflection of his aesthetic work, to be addressed in the course of this chapter.

The contrast between the kind of imaginative philosophical reflection just touched upon, and Coleridge's deductive, systematic approach becomes apparent in his discussions of ideas of reason.<sup>684</sup> Insofar as the apprehension of creative ideas is mediated by the poetic or secondary imagination, Coleridge depends on poetic insight and uses concepts reflectively, in the Kantian aesthetic sense with which we have become familiar. It may be recalled that such aesthetic conceptual reflection involves the subordination of conceptual activity to imagination's dynamically receptive mode of construal. In aesthetic reflection, intrinsically static concepts thus take on an open-ended, interpretive flexibility, surrendering the fixity of their determining or defining activity as merely static snapshots, extracted from an ever-moving reality. In dealing with ideas of reason, therefore, Coleridge's insights are romantic in the sense of eliciting an intimation of mystery that can never be fully grasped through concepts and instrumentalised. However, the overarching and aprioristic conception of organic process under which Coleridge's creative ideas are subsumed pre-determines their manifestation according to a superimposed conceptual grid of final causality: a spatially bounded plan artificially delimiting, and thus falsifying, temporal movement.

This chapter will now continue on the course that has been emerging through this thesis, and which has just been summarised, as I go into more detailed analysis of the theological significance of Coleridge's particular strand of romantic poetry and criticism, in order to show the biblical inspiration of such artistic endeavour, and its compatibility with a Kierkegaardian understanding of paradoxical faith. The compatibility of both authors will be shown to hinge on the compatibility of their views with a Bergsonian conception of time.

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<sup>684</sup> See chapter 6 section 1.3.

In the first part of the previous chapter, I have introduced, defined, and analysed the key terms around which Coleridge constructs his systematic thought,<sup>685</sup> so in what follows I will largely assume a conceptual grasp of their basic nature and admittedly complex inter-relations. I will, however quote from Coleridge's own analyses and definitions to some extent for the sake of clarity. I would like to underline what I stated earlier, that what I hope will emerge in this chapter, as I move, gradually, to re-address these same philosophical *foci* in terms of Coleridge's reflections upon aesthetic symbols of transcendence, is the radically different, and more theologically exciting directions to which these self-same concepts can lead us. It must in all fairness be acknowledged that this treatment is to a great extent facilitated by the depth of the conceptual analysis evidenced in Coleridge more systematic work. The main contention in this regard is simply that the aprioristic nature of Coleridge's deductive/systematic approach – especially in relation to time, as just discussed – works against his insights; that the riches Coleridge uncovers through the rigours of systematic analysis will only bear theological fruit in relation to another mode of approach, as represented by his poetically motivated, faith-based aesthetic reflection.

### **(1) Coleridge's imagination: distinguishing systematic theory from aesthetic and poetic practice**

I have been drawing attention to Coleridge's imaginatively reflective approach to symbols of transcendence, which, as will be seen, demands an existential *participation* in the creative ideas he seeks to elucidate in receptive ethico-aesthetic terms, as imaginative activity unites thought, feeling and will in a personally involving, ethical response. What unfolds in this section should serve to guide interpretation of the following two sections, as I distinguish and try to build upon Coleridge's imaginatively reflective approach. In favouring an approach through imaginative conceptual indeterminacy over Coleridge's strictly deductive thought, I aim to show the compatibility of faith-centred Coleridgean aesthetics with Kierkegaard's thought on the role of ethical imagination in receptivity to Christological revelation, as set out in chapter one.

The relation between subject and object to be described as a 'Coleridgean aesthetic relation' in this chapter is not to be conceived as a *conceptual* unity, an abstraction, such as the conceptual sublation of Coleridge's post-Kantian system, which is supposedly not merely describing, but really enacting a metaphysical development and revelation of the ultimate, ideal nature of reality. Coleridge's systematic distinction between ideas of reason and concepts, like Hegel's theory of the 'concrete universal', contends that conceptuality passes through a real unfolding process of triadic logic, that is independent of, and informs, the thinking subject. The logically,

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<sup>685</sup> See chapter 6 section 1.



and also metaphysically developing idea which emerges is deemed the creative source of empirical phenomena. We discovered earlier that Kierkegaard's writing is stimulated by the need to point out, in relation to the thought of Hegel, that such metaphysical claims are illusory, that the Hegelian (or Coleridgean) systematician never leaves the realm of hypothetical thought, achieving only the thought or mere concept of real movement, while no actual movement takes place.

While the metaphysical elements of Coleridge's aesthetics are indeed called ideas, I suggest that in his aesthetic reflections they display a very different character to their logical translation in his systematic thought. Coleridge is adamant concerning the total difference between concepts and imaginatively intuited ideas of reason, which he holds to be dynamically effective, super-phenomenal organising powers, only very imperfectly approximated by concepts, as, indeed, necessarily involving conceptual contradiction. I will suggest that while Coleridge's systematic translation of 'ideal' insights cannot be supported, as presented in the 'polar-logical' terms of the *Opus Maximum* and elsewhere, those same aesthetic insights into a super-phenomenal creativity are of considerable theological value within the context of Coleridgean faith-based or ethical aesthetics.

### **(1.1) Critique of Ferreira's generalisation concerning Coleridgean ideas: biblical imagination**

Ferreira, from whose book, *Transforming Vision* we drew nourishment in chapter one in relation to Kierkegaardian imagination, also considers the Coleridgean imagination in the course of the same work, but does not make my distinction between Coleridge the Christian metaphysical poet and Coleridge the systematic metaphysician. This leads him to generalise about Coleridgean imagination, claiming that Coleridge's concept of imagination is intrinsically confused and self-contradictory. Ferreira claims that Coleridge vacillates between a 'Hegelian' conception of imagination's role in mediating subjectivity and objectivity and descriptions of imaginative activity that are more in line with Kierkegaard's position.<sup>686</sup>

One kind of emphasis in Coleridge's view of imagination is illustrated in the references to it as a faculty 'at once both active and passive', and to the role of imaginative 'balance' of opposite qualities. This sounds at first hearing like a reference to the role of imagination in maintaining elements in tension, which I have described as suspension and found to be central to imagination in the Climacus account.<sup>687</sup> These descriptions, then, indicate a way in which

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<sup>686</sup> The same charge of vacillation was levelled by Coleridge's amanuensis, Joseph Henry Green, although with an opposing motive, Green being committed to strict systematic logic: see J. H. Green, *Spiritual Philosophy* (2 vols.) (London: Macmillan and Co., 1865), vol. 1, pp. 252-60.

<sup>687</sup> See chapter 2 section 1.

imagination is understood to transcend a dichotomy between activity and passivity and to sustain a genuine tension. At other times, however, a quite different emphasis can be detected in Coleridge's thought – namely an emphasis on the imagination as that faculty which 'fuses' and 'blends'. Coleridge is at one with a Hegelian notion of synthesis when he writes of the reconciliation of opposites as achieved when 'the two component counterpowers actually interpenetrate each other, and generate a higher third including both the former, "*ita tamen ut sit alia et major*"'.<sup>688</sup>

I shall argue now that such generalisation is unfounded, and that the distinction which I have been making between a self-consistent aesthetic account of imagination and a theoretical context in which it is often set, only to be distorted, can illumine Coleridge's view of imagination in its aesthetic role as genuinely independent of his systematic thinking.

Firstly, I suggest that Ferreira works with a distinction which is misplaced. The claim of *an ambiguity within one account* between two models of imaginative unification, opposed to one another in terms of imaginative tension on the one hand, and imaginative sublation on the other, can be shown not to have force.<sup>689</sup> Attention to the actual development of Coleridge's thought as evidenced in the sequence of his texts will justify the distinction I have been drawing between Coleridge's systematic philosophy as one case and his ethical, aesthetic and critical reflection on the role of imagination as another. Where Ferreira posits an ambiguity within one account, I find grounds to suggest a single imaginative vision submitted to two mutually antithetical accounts or modes of presentation: the one conceptually indeterminate and imaginatively driven, the other driven by *a priori* conceptual determination. Undermining Ferreira's assessment is that *both* the terms 'fusion' and 'balance' tend to be used in reference to a *tensional* model of imaginative creativity in Coleridge's aesthetic writings: the very model which Ferreira himself is glad to attribute to Kierkegaard, as we have seen.<sup>690</sup>

As an example of this claim for an incalculably creative tension between fusion and balance, such as I focused on in chapter two, I will quote shortly from Ina Lipkowitz, who writes on the development of Coleridge's thought concerning the distinction between imagination and fancy. Lipkowitz suggests this latter distinction is motivated by Coleridge's need to find a ground of difference between Hebrew, scriptural poetic sublimity and Greek literature's imagery of polytheistic gods.

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<sup>688</sup> M. Jamie Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 93. Ferreira quotes from a MS note of Coleridge's cited in James V. Baker, *The Sacred River: Coleridge's Theory of Imagination*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana, 1957), p. 200.

<sup>689</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 91-6.

<sup>690</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 96.

According to her reading, Coleridge came to see pagan poetry as essentially allegorical, combining forms and images merely associatively, and working at the merely conceptual level of the instrumental understanding which for him, as we have seen in chapter six, merely re-casts static images of sense through the concepts drawn from them, the result being as lifeless as a re-articulated skeleton. In assigning this empirical and mechanistic mode of procedure to the fancy, as distinct from imagination, Coleridge was able to develop his dynamic view of imagination as a living and organising force, that in Kant's terms could 'give the rule to art' as a more than phenomenal organising power, uniting contraries into living aesthetic symbols.<sup>691</sup> Coleridge came to this position around 1802, and according to Lipkowitz, the meanings assigned to fancy and imagination respectively 'remain fairly consistent throughout his life' from then on.<sup>692</sup>

There is an important point to note here, with reference to the distinction between systematic and aesthetic approaches that I am arguing for, as against Ferreira's charge of conceptual incoherence in Coleridge's writing on imagination generally. It is not only that Coleridge's aesthetic position remained constant from around 1802 onwards.<sup>693</sup> It is also that Coleridge's aesthetic position developed and was maintained subsequently on the basis of 'speculations and conclusions about the Bible', which Lipkowitz suggests are confined to the informal media of 'letters, notebook entries and marginalia'.<sup>694</sup> In short, Coleridge's Christian aesthetic, as distinct from his system, was shaped by the concerns of his Christian faith from 1802 onwards. Importantly, overarching, conceptual closure is not Coleridge's aim in the less formal aesthetic reflections to which Lipkowitz refers.

Lipkowitz cites a letter written by Coleridge, just a few months after the Dejection Ode in 1802, to show how he had grown to conceive the sublimity that Lowth had found in Biblical literature not in terms of specific phenomenal images (as prohibited by the injunction of the second commandment concerning idolatry),<sup>695</sup> but instead as a creative energy or power, of which the imagination is both matrix and vehicle. Lipkowitz writes that Coleridge sees the 'ideal poet not as one who merely borrows sublimity from scriptural imagery but who, by virtue of the

<sup>691</sup> Ina Lipkowitz, 'Inspiration and the Poetic Imagination: Samuel Taylor Coleridge', *Studies in Romanticism* 30: 4 (1991), p. 616.

<sup>692</sup> Lipkowitz, 'Inspiration and the Poetic Imagination', p. 615.

<sup>693</sup> Indeed, against any charges that there is an orthodox 'trinitarian' Coleridge divorceable from an earlier 'German' romantic-idealist I have, in the last chapter, singled out his late, great unfinished work, a self-professed Christian philosophy (the incomplete *Opus Maximum*, dated between 1819-1832) as exemplifying Coleridge's systematic philosophical approach. See for example Coleridge, 'Proposed Preface to the First Volume' in *Opus Maximum*, p. 4 and footnote 3, p. 4, where Coleridge refers to his work as a 'System of Faith and Philosophy: or Catena Veritatum de Deo, Homine et Natura'. The latter, Latin description especially emphasises the rigorously deductive, systematic intention of Coleridge's project, meaning 'Chain of Truths concerning God, Man and Nature'.

<sup>39</sup> Ina Lipkowitz, 'Inspiration and the Poetic Imagination', p. 614.

<sup>695</sup> See Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, (London: Thomas Tegg, 1839), pp. 147-188.

“shaping spirit of Imagination”, unites “the passion and the life, whose fountains are within”<sup>696</sup> with the life of nature:

Nature has her proper interest: & he will know what it is, who believes & feels, that every Thing has a life of it's [sic] own, & that we are all *one* life. A Poet's *Heart & Intellect* should be *combined, intimately combined and unified*, with the great appearances in Nature – & not merely held in solution & loose mixture with them, in the shape of formal Similies.<sup>697</sup>

Within the framework of his aesthetic thought, therefore, Coleridge uses strong expressions of unity, such as ‘intimately combined and unified’, which we have seen Ferreira to associate only with Coleridge’s more systematic thinking, in order to express a *tension* at the heart of the work of the poetic imagination. This tension is embodied in the insight (in the same quoted letter) that ‘everything has a life on its own’, on the one hand, and yet paradoxically, ‘that we are all one life’. Coleridge asserts what is for him, in this context, an aesthetic and thus conceptually irresolvable paradox concerning imaginative activity, on the basis of a biblically mediated poetic insight into the divine creativity manifesting in all creatures, and thus on theological grounds springing from faith. This insight into the role of imagination in intimating divine creativity is in itself an important finding in terms of theological epistemology. However, as we are about to see, such insight was distorted by the idealist context in which Coleridge would go on to situate it.

Having made this distinction between imagination and fancy on the basis of faith – as evidenced by the biblically inspiration of his aesthetic meditations just addressed – Coleridge would go on to make a further distinction within imagination itself in his *Biographia Literaria*, as he tries to use his aesthetic insight in the service of a more philosophically over-arching, or systematically oriented context.<sup>698</sup> In making this further distinction between primary and secondary imagination in relation to a systematic idealist account, Coleridge thus adjusts his theologically based epistemological claim that divine creative activity is discernible through faithfully receptive, imaginative activity, by assigning to the imagination an epistemologically ‘primary’ function over and above its aesthetic – and thus now ‘secondary’ – role. Coleridge in effect tries to derive the epistemological insights gained through aesthetic symbolisation from a more fundamental, transcendental principle of the possibility of any experience, conceived in terms of imagination, but within the context of an overarching polar logical account.<sup>699</sup> It has emerged in the last chapter that I have reason to suspect the apriorism of Coleridge’s epistemological work,

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<sup>696</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘Dejection’, in Ernest Hartley Coleridge (ed.), *Coleridge's Poetical Works*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 365, l. 46.

<sup>697</sup> Earl Leslie Griggs (ed.), *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956-71), vol. 2, p. 864, Coleridge’s italics; Lipkowitz, ‘Inspiration and the Poetic Imagination’, p. 615. Coleridge’s italics.

<sup>698</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304-6.

<sup>699</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 296-300.

but I shall be arguing, in section two, that Coleridge's ethico-epistemological insights can be re-focused upon his earlier, theologically motivated conception of imaginative activity, as discerned by Lipkowitz. I will argue that the concept of a fundamental epistemological role for the imagination is already present and adequately accounted for within Coleridge's original, biblically inspired model of imagination.

I have been giving grounds to suggest that Ferreira makes an unwarranted generalisation in assigning conceptual incoherence to Coleridge's views on imagination. He fails to make the distinction between Coleridge's aesthetic and systematic positions as I have described them in terms of a personal, rather than philosophical ambiguity, expressive of a conflict of tendencies in the context of faith and its poetic expression on the one hand, and that of a philosophical drive towards an objectively systematic expression for that faith, on the other. In the previous chapter, I have argued that Coleridge is incoherent, but within the context of his systematic philosophy as distinct from his poetics, aesthetics and informal reflections, which I am arguing embody an approach which is consistent in its own right.

Coleridge's further systematic conceptualisation of the relation between Creator and creature, in his *Opus Maximum*, places them in differentiated identity, on the basis of a meontological understanding of divine and human willing, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter.<sup>700</sup> This meontological thinking bears considerable similarity to the later thought of Schelling, as expressed in his *Treatise on Human Freedom*.<sup>701</sup> But in the *Biographia Literaria* of 1817, written before composing the surviving fragments of the *Opus Maximum*, (dated roughly between 1819 and 1832),<sup>702</sup> Coleridge was already setting the distinction between primary and secondary imagination within an earlier Schellingian context, actually utilising, verbatim, whole pages from Schelling's *Transcendental Idealism* of 1800, a work discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

Coleridge famously never finished the presentation of Schelling's earlier systematic position in *Biographia Literaria* (publishing in its place a 'letter' from a 'friend' – which in fact he wrote himself – 'advising him' against this on various prudential grounds).<sup>703</sup> Instead, Coleridge then proceeds directly to what he intends to derive as the conclusion of his version of what is largely Schelling's argument: his own distinctions between primary and secondary imagination and fancy.<sup>704</sup> We have just seen that the distinction between poetic (secondary) imagination and fancy derives from Coleridge's faith and biblical poetics, owing nothing to Schelling. We have

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<sup>700</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 226-33.

<sup>701</sup> F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, pp. 27-30.

<sup>702</sup> See McFarland's editorial note in Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, p. xx.

<sup>703</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 300-4.

<sup>704</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 304-6.

also seen, with J. Robert Barth in the last chapter and with Lipkowitz in this, that Coleridge's biblically inspired conception of imagination performs an important, theologically motivated epistemological role in its own right, through the creation of aesthetic symbols. However, it is also evident that Coleridge goes on to translate his Christian aesthetic/epistemological insight into the Schellingian context of transcendental logic in which *Biographia Literaria* is conceived, as we saw in our analysis of primary imagination in the previous chapter. Thus, and as I suggested in the first section of this chapter, Coleridge's own use of his theologically promising aesthetic-epistemological insights can do them less than justice.

Conceivably, it was some sense of the incongruity between his Christian faith and its idealist philosophical interpretation which led Coleridge to 'fudge' or cut short the systematic development of the Schellingian argument in *Biographia Literaria*, thus leaving undeveloped the monistic and deterministic tendency of the Schellingian conceptual mechanics through which he would have tried to reach a conclusion concerning the role of imagination in enabling the possibility of experience in general.<sup>705</sup> In view of this explicit un-connectedness of Coleridge's conclusion concerning primary imagination with the Schellingian context in which it is presented, in this section I aim to explore the ethico-epistemological implications of primary imagination's experientially conditioning role, when re-addressed in terms of Coleridge's earlier conception of poetic imagination's role in receptivity to sublime symbolisation: his biblically based and paradoxically tensile model of poetic imagination. Thus freed from what I have been suggesting is a procrustean post-Kantianism, I contend that Coleridge's epistemological doctrine of a ethical, transcendently conditioning imaginative function – as already latent in his earlier, poetic imaginative account – represents a theologically fruitful development of Coleridge's thinking in an ethico-aesthetic direction.<sup>706</sup>

## **(2) The aesthetic will: Coleridge's a reconsideration of Coleridge's ethical epistemology, as introduced in chapter six**

As a theoretical setting for all further issues to be introduced in this chapter, we must now start building on some of the concepts introduced in the last by exploring the dynamics of imagination's relation to the will, on the basis of aspects Coleridge's systematic ethical epistemology. Although theologically objectionable as it stands, as I have suggested,

<sup>705</sup> Shawcross, Introduction to *Biographia Literaria*, pp. lxx-lxxi.

<sup>706</sup> In the *Opus Maximum* Coleridge evidently believed that he had taken a sufficiently, and *theologically* critical stance towards Schelling's thought, and could claim to derive his meontology straight from the mystical or theosophical tradition of Jacob Boehme (Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, p. 232, and n59), from whom both he and Schelling had drawn inspiration, (see Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, p. 95, and Shawcross's note, pp. 242-243; see also the passages of Boehme's 'Mysterium Pansophicum' in Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, p. 85 ). In the previous chapter I have suggested otherwise, on the grounds of the post-Kantian teleological, or calculative understanding of time that undergirds Coleridge's approach in this later work. This consideration led to my theological judgement in that chapter that owing to the teleologically oriented polar logic of his systematic work, Coleridge fails to do justice to the genuine inconceivability of revelation.

nevertheless I will now show that basic elements of that epistemology can be resituated fruitfully in the context of Coleridge's earlier, biblically inspired and tensional – as opposed to polar – model of imagination, as discussed in the last section.

We have seen that there are two distinct sets of distinctions that are developed by Coleridge. Firstly, a distinction is made between imagination and fancy. Then Coleridge goes on to distinguish two functions within that same, biblically inspired concept of imagination, in order to subserve his systematic aims in the Schellingian context of *Biographia Literaria*. Coleridge thus systematically distinguishes a symbolic, aesthetic function from an overarching and transcendental epistemic function of the imagination. The two functions are then labelled secondary and primary imagination, respectively.

In what follows I suggest that the transcendental, or primary function, as developed in *Biographia Literaria*, is a damaging modification of the ethico-aesthetic epistemological insights already latent in Coleridge's earlier, biblical model of imagination, which I will attempt to draw forth. My contention is that the earlier, biblically based model of imaginative productivity can achieve, through an ethically receptive conceptual indeterminacy, what the later development of primary imagination seeks to achieve through logical determination. I argue, on theological grounds, that Coleridge's later systematic distinction of the primary from the secondary or artistic imagination is the result of the subordinating of his earlier imaginative concept to a polar logical determinism, resulting in the loss of a genuine account of ethical freedom. I suggest that the resultant polarising of the imagination into primary and secondary roles deforms the ethico-aesthetic epistemological promise of the earlier formulation in terms of biblical sublimity. I will show, in short, that what the primary imaginative model seeks to accomplish systematically – to be a transcendental condition of possible self-consciousness – can more adequately be thought from within the resources of Coleridge's earlier imaginative model, as not invoking a teleological logic which dissolves ethical freedom.

For the sake of clarity, in the rest of this section I will reserve the term 'primary imagination' for the polar logical model (together with its polar correlate, 'secondary imagination'). The term 'creative imagination' will be used to denote Coleridge's earlier, biblical model of imagination. I suggest that creative imagination, in this latter sense, can accommodate both the transcendental and the poetic roles later distinguished by Coleridge. Both roles will be shown to be essentially related in terms of a logically irreducible and ethico-aesthetic, organic interdependence, rather than through a polar logical relation.

According to Coleridge's ethical epistemology, as we saw in chapter six,<sup>707</sup> human self-consciousness participates in divine reason, an ontological structure imbuing nature and all the subsidiary faculties of the mind – emotion, sense, and understanding. The will, as the intelligent and dynamic principle of human life is the subjective pole of human participation in reason, its conditioning polar contrary being the conscience. All the activities of the mind involve reason and would be impossible without it. As reason illumines the mind through the response of will to conscience, it is essentially ethical. Any form of objective consciousness would be impossible without reason, and since the rationality of the will resides in its living response to the illumination of conscience, it follows that conscience must be the condition of all possible objective consciousness.

We also learned in the last chapter that what Coleridge dubs the primary imagination, in *Biographia Literaria*, is the vehicle of reason, as the medium uniting the self to its own otherness, (i.e., conscience as the immanence of the logos, the symbolic presence of divine reason to the mind). In this way imagination is also said to be the subjective manifestation of *natura naturans*, the organ of polar productive power (one power manifesting in two forms).<sup>708</sup> The primary imagination is thus found to be a medium of organic creativity, uniting that which may be distinguished but never divided (the differentiated identity of dynamic, bi-polar reality). So we can say that the primary imagination enables all possible finite perception by simultaneously distinguishing and relating opposites, as the medium of polar creative process. Yet we have also learned that what truly governs Coleridge's systematic account is a polar logic, meaning that if there is a role for imaginative activity in this mediation of polar opposites, it will not be a freely creative role.

But as I pointed out at length in the last section and in the previous chapter, this systematic style of thought fails the Christological test of Kierkegaard's thinking, as discussed in the first two chapters. A governing *a priori*ism of dialectical logic, such as Coleridge's, is in effect an attempt to bypass Christological paradox, evading the saving possibility of Christ's absolute challenge to all our pre-conceptions. As Kierkegaard shows in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, dialectical idealisms such as Coleridge's never emerge from the hypothetical realm of conceptual mediation into the life-contexts where existing subjects might confront the paradoxical revelation of the divine incarnation.<sup>709</sup> As I showed in the last chapter, Coleridge situates his theology within an overarching philosophical trajectory, an account of the process of redemption of which the end is always teleologically foreknown and prefigured in terms of a projected logical scheme. My criticism is that human thinking is the sole initiator and completer

<sup>707</sup> See chapter 6 section 1.

<sup>708</sup> See chapter 6, section 1; for more on the concept of *natura naturans*, see chapter four, below.

<sup>709</sup> See, for example, Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, pp. 190-193.



of this scheme. On this teleologically closed conceptual basis, there is no experiential opportunity, no experiential time to open ourselves to the possibility of genuine revelation, no time for the possibility of a living encounter in which we might learn about ourselves that which we could not always already have been capable of discovering for ourselves, without the need of a saving revelation.

With this theological argument in mind, I will now try to relate Coleridge's systematic ethico-epistemology, as addressed in the last chapter, to the context of his biblically based account of creative imagination, from which I hold his insights into the ethical nature of imaginative activity to derive. As discussed above with reference to Lipkowitz, Coleridge's imaginatively tensile epistemological model – creative imagination – is completely free of the all-determining apriorism just criticised. Importantly, we can also see on the basis of Lipkowitz's account that systematically construed secondary imagination, as discussed in chapter six, corresponds in indeterminate conceptual structure to the creative imagination. Henceforth I shall therefore cease to distinguish secondary from creative imagination, and shall identify the two, referring in what follows only to creative imagination, in contrast to systematic primary imagination.

Creative imagination uses concepts reflectively or suggestively, or, as in the Kantian account of aesthetics (chapter four), in the free play of imaginative vision.<sup>710</sup> So unlike the primary imagination, creative imagination does not harmonise contraries by mediating their solution in polar logical terms. Rather, creative imagination holds opposites up to one another in an aesthetically productive tension. The creative imagination mediates ideas symbolically through a conceptually indeterminate, or intimative, aesthetic awareness.<sup>711</sup> It is in this aesthetic manner that poetic creativity is held by Coleridge to be an echo of divine creativity.<sup>712</sup>

But here we should pause to reflect that in Coleridge's ethical epistemological account, the ego's relation to the alterity of conscience, as what Coleridge describes as a 'testifying state',<sup>713</sup> is itself also conceived as an imaginative mediated symbolic state as the immanent, relational manifestation of the Logos; the embodiment, as participated divine reason, of divine ideal creativity: the father's own otherness.<sup>714</sup> I suggest, therefore, that this response to conscience, as imaginatively mediated, can plausibly be conceived as of the same, conceptually reflective and fiduciary order as the discernment of all other aesthetic symbols of the creative imagination.

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<sup>710</sup> See chapter 4 section 3.1.

<sup>711</sup> See chapter 6 subsections 1.3 and 1.6.

<sup>712</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304-6.

<sup>713</sup> Coleridge, *The Friend* part 1, p. 159.

<sup>714</sup> Through the ideality of conscience, the logos indwells us as that to which the will responds in order to self-consciousness. As ideal, conscience is no concept to be understood, but a symbolic manifestation of divine reason to be engaged with through imaginative activity; see Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual* appendix C, pp. 66-70; Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 833-44; Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, p. 41.

Thus, re-conceiving Coleridge's ethical epistemology in terms of his account of the creative imagination, (in place of his account of the primary imagination), we can say that the will's imaginatively mediated relation to the symbol of conscience is only truly ethical only in so far as it is aesthetic, as a manifestation of the act of faith demanded by all conceptually indeterminate, reflective interpretation. On this basis it can also be said that only in so far as a response to conscience demands the interpretive freedom to reflect imaginatively – thus only in so far as it is an aesthetic activity – can that response be deemed truly ethical, since we have found such imaginative activity to be inseparable from a trusting openness in the discernment of alterity.

I suggest that Coleridge's ethical epistemology, thus understood in terms of his earlier imaginative concept, (or creative imagination, as I have been describing it), is capable of further elucidation in organicistic, or conceptually irreducible and thus paradoxical terms. What Coleridge describes as the act of fidelity to conscience occurs as an imaginative response to a symbol, and we have seen in chapter six that such symbolic perception is organically structured. Thus neither aspect – the symbol or the response of the will – can be said to take precedence, one over the other. The relation between conscience and will is thus not a linear or causally mechanical development. J. Robert Barth, as we saw, describes just such an organic relationship between a subject's willingness to see poetic symbols, and the necessary presence of such a symbol 'already' in order for one to be able to respond to it.<sup>715</sup> An organic, imaginatively mediated, mutual causality is thus in play here, in the case of conscience just as much as in the case of poetic symbolisation and response. Subjective response and the imaginatively mediated symbol to which it responds – the conscience – must be thought of as interdependent, interpenetrating 'poles'. But now we can see that such an epistemological polarity is not of the determinate logical order which Coleridge's systematic interests foisted upon it; rather it is the intrinsically open-ended polarity of a hermeneutical circle, a polarity of creative aesthetic interpretation. As irreducible to either a linear, causal order or a polarised, transcendental logical order, such 'interpenetration' is in no way to be thought of in terms of the Hegelian-style conceptual sublation that we saw criticised by Ferreira, above.

Here we are reminded of our positive findings concerning the role of transcendental imagination in the work of Kant and Schelling in earlier chapters. In spite of the theologically motivated reservations which have led me to judge negatively the logical chains which they suspended from it, we have seen that each of them shared an insight into the conceptually irreducible nature of imagination. Recalling accounts of Kantian and Schellingian imagination as analysed in chapters four and five, the alternative account of Coleridgean epistemology which I have just

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<sup>715</sup> Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, p. 41

offered, as stripped of its procrustean logical framework, leads us once again to a view of transcendental imaginative activity as displaying the organic structure of a 'grounded ground',<sup>716</sup>.

By acting thus receptively (i.e., by being both active and passive at once), the imagination, as Coleridge originally conceived it in the interest of his theological poetics, can also be seen to fulfil the transcendental epistemological role which Coleridge realised was essential for the perception of the symbol of conscience. It does so without the subsuming of imaginative activity under a polar logical scheme, a logical hegemony leading both to the denial of divine revelatory freedom and of human freedom to respond to divine grace. Coleridgean creative imagination, as thus originally conceived, as we learned from Lipkowitz, can thus be shown to mediate a polar and conceptually paradoxical tension between activity and passivity: between conscience and the will in the case of imagination conceived as the transcendental medium of possible self-consciousness; between aesthetic discernment and symbolic intimations of transcendence with regard to poetic imaginative activity.

### **(3) Temporal, Organic Symbolism: Coleridge's secondary imaginative activity as perspectival, durational and corrigible**

I have just been reassessing Coleridge's epistemology in conceptually indeterminate terms through focusing on the organic nature of Coleridgean imaginative activity in response to symbols, including that of the conscience. I found that, removed from an *a priori* framework, Coleridge's ethical epistemology can take on a more 'existential' cast, echoing Ferreira's account of Kierkegaardian imagination in chapter one. I now turn to the way in which Coleridge's conception of aesthetic productivity – secondary imaginative activity – thrives on just such an organic conceptual indeterminacy, as displaying a non-linear (non-causal) productive structure that is irreducible to conceptual resolution.

According to Coleridge's account, as we have seen, the creation and perception of poetic, symbolic meaning through secondary imaginative activity, demands an ethical element of fidelity or commitment. Poetic composition demands a willingness to participate in, or open oneself out towards a poetic intimation of the omnipresence of God.<sup>717</sup> Put in terms of Coleridge's aesthetics (as provisionally outlined with relation to Lipkowitz earlier in this

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<sup>716</sup> This concept was explained in chapter 5 section 2.

<sup>717</sup> Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, pp. 40-3, 45.

chapter) through secondary imaginative activity, subject and aesthetic object imaginatively interact, in such a way that neither pole can claim a logical or temporal priority over the other. Rather, subjective construal and objective content interact in the production of a poetic symbol of transcendence.<sup>718</sup> The symbol *per se* also gives poetic-participative access to the poet's vision for the reader: access to a vision wholeness. But this vision is, unavoidably only a perspectival and temporal disclosure: an intimation only of divine significance.<sup>719</sup>

In his Lines: 'Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey',<sup>720</sup> Wordsworth found, on revisiting Tintern Abbey, that the memory of his previous symbolic experience was enriched and transformed by being disconfirmed as his perspective had necessarily expanded and changed through the passage of time and personal maturing.<sup>721</sup> In just this way, Coleridge's symbols are conceptually indeterminate and only intimative. They are thus intrinsically open-ended and corrigible, as there is always room for temporal growth and challenge to expectation and memory through the re-visiting of symbolic disclosures. Symbolic meaning is thus always open to unanticipated and indeed unanticipatable transformations, in line with the Bergsonian concept of time that we have analysed in prior chapters, and to which we will return towards the end of this.

Furthermore, we have seen, both in the last chapter and the previous section, that in its experientially conditioning epistemological role, the creative imagination, as I have dubbed it in the previous section,<sup>722</sup> enables possible perception, for Coleridge, by uniting the whole human life in an ethical act of receptivity to conscience, as the condition of the self-differentiation that is self-consciousness. Thus we have found that both the primary and secondary forms of imaginative activity, conditioning ordinary empirical experience and symbolic-artistic experience respectively, are intrinsically ethical in orientation. At the level of secondary imagination, an act of faith in the meaningfulness of a symbol is crucial for the possibility of its discernment, just as empirically objective experience of the world is conditioned by the imaginatively mediated act of willed subordination in recognition of the authoritative voice of conscience, enabling self-consciousness.

<sup>718</sup> Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, pp. 74-76

<sup>719</sup> See Colin Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 143-4. Gunton writes of the corrigibility of apprehension of Coleridgean ideas, conceived as dynamic and sublime intimations of a final truth towards which one may move in a process of ever-deepening engagement, retro-actively transforming one's prior interpretive appreciations.

<sup>720</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, pp. 241-44.

<sup>721</sup> I base my interpretation of Wordsworth here on Stephen Prickett's *Words and the Word*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); see chapters 3 and 4 (under 'The Book of Nature' and 'The Paradoxes of Disconfirmation') especially pp. 139-40 and pp. 162-3, in relation to the diachronic and synchronic interplay of poetic typology and symbolism, as potentially leading to the disconfirmation of symbolic expectation, as interpreted along the lines of the interpretive 'leaps' involved in 'Wittgensteinian' aspect-seeing, as already featured in this thesis in relation to Ferreira's discussion of imaginative receptivity to transcendence in Kierkegaard, in chapter 2.1.

<sup>722</sup> That is, the concept of imagination founded on biblical symbolisation of the sublime, which, as I argued in the last section, encompasses both 'primary' and 'secondary' roles in an aesthetic, conceptually indeterminate – rather than *a priori* – manner.

In both functions, and with due qualification with regard to the mode of conceptuality through which primary imagination is understood, (as addressed in the last section), the imagination emerges as fundamentally attentive to otherness, acting receptively in order to discern justly. Imaginative construal is thus at the heart of both ordinary and symbolic awareness, and its disclosures are dependent on the responsible and disinterested comportment of the percipient. That imagination is at the heart of ordinary phenomenal perception indicates, I suggest, that our everyday engagements with the world, even the most trivial, are implicitly symbolical encounters with transcendence, for a suitably receptive and faithful attitude. Following John Coulson,<sup>723</sup> Barth writes that Coleridge's symbolic doctrine re-animates the sixteenth/seventeenth century tradition in English poetics in which the 'one life within us and abroad'<sup>724</sup> is discernible for a unified and trusting sensibility.<sup>725</sup> I suggest that, both epistemologically and aesthetically, this ethical and imaginative stress on personal comportment in relation to experience has interesting implications for one's habitual outlook on daily life, suggesting that the world may literally become an entirely different place, depending on the gestalt, or mode of imaginative connection, through which it is discerned. Something similar to Heidegger's reflections on 'attunement' in *Being and Time* seems to be echoed here, (how one's mood or manner of approach lights up one's life-world),<sup>726</sup> just as this Coleridgean epistemological 'comportment' echoes Ferreira's discussion of the Kierkegaardian imagination in the turn to paradoxical faith in chapter one.

As we discovered earlier, Kant had already seen artistic practice and perception as related to ethical activity through the disinterestedness of judgements of taste, in his demand that they be uninfluenced by the self-indulgent desire for self-gratification.<sup>727</sup> With Coleridge we have come to see that an ethical dimension is fundamental to the proper functioning of imagination in both its primarily epistemological and secondarily aesthetic tasks. We should add, moreover, that the ethical imaginative energy envisioned by Coleridge as at work in enabling empirical and artistic experience is significantly related to a Kierkegaardian, existential model of ethical activity: the 'whole man' – thought, feeling and will – uniting through an imaginative response to one's environment, ethical, empirical and aesthetic.

Secondary, artistic imagination, as a power mediating polar energies, is described by Coleridge as 'first put in action by the Will and Understanding'.<sup>728</sup> Again, Coleridge displays a

<sup>723</sup> John Coulson, *Newman and the Common Tradition: a Study in the Language of Church and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 3-13.

<sup>724</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Eolian Harp', in E. H. Coleridge (ed.), *Poetical Works*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969 ), p. 101.

<sup>725</sup> Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, p. 27.

<sup>726</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, John Macquarrie & Edward Robinson (tr.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), pp. 172-3.

<sup>727</sup> See chapter 4 section 3.

<sup>728</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 2, pp. 16-18.

Kierkegaardian awareness that human life is more than just objective thinking; that just as a truly ethical stance or comportment to life implies an integrity or wholeness of response to the demands of moral consciousness, so also, in the disinterested honesty required for true aesthetic production and perception, Coleridge holds that the imagination responds through the united activity of practical and theoretical elements of consciousness.<sup>729</sup> Both the poet's creative discernment and a reader's appreciative participation in poetic symbols must be set in motion by the whole person, through an integral response to a dawning awareness of transcendence. But in addition to this, I suggest that Coleridge's formulation draws attention to what by now should be a familiar ambiguity.

Coleridge says that the creation and perception of symbols occurs when the imagination is set in motion by the will and understanding.<sup>730</sup> And yet it is imagination, as the 'esemplastic', or unitive, power that alone is able to unite different polarities of awareness, such as will and understanding.<sup>731</sup> Again, we are confronted with the irreducible paradox of the imagination's organic structure, and thereby its status as a grounded ground of experiential possibilities: as inextricably both active and passive. The imagination, in spontaneous or active receptivity, is both follower and leader intrinsically. As a tensile power productive of causally irreducible differences, the imagination is, *in itself*, indeterminable, or conceptually irreducible. We found, similarly, that Kierkegaard views human experiencing, or 'inter-esse', as fundamentally a hermeneutical process of the same causally irreducible order.<sup>732</sup>

We saw in the first chapter that for Kierkegaard, the imaginative mediation or construal necessarily at work in actual experience, as situated between reality and ideality, is in a sense a circular procedure, as subjective and objective facets of experience mutually enrich each other, real life becoming imaginatively permeated with consciousness as possibilities for personal growth or hitherto unperceived options are discerned. The familiar is made strange by imagination, and glimpsed in a new light. Barth similarly suggests that, for Coleridge, what is presented poetically in a given work can radiate symbolic depth through an act of faith or interpretive commitment.<sup>733</sup> In Coleridge's romantic poetics the percipient is enriched by what is symbolically intimated, while the intelligibility of the symbol is contingent upon an imaginative act of faith, in the form of an interpretive openness to the possibility of symbolic insight: an ethico-aesthetic, attentive trust. The organic relationship between poles of experiencing is thus conceptually circular, rather than linear and causal.

<sup>729</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, pp. 69-70.

<sup>730</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 2, pp. 16-18.

<sup>731</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 168-70.

<sup>732</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 314.

<sup>733</sup> Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, p. 45.

Coleridge writes in the *Statesman's Manual* that the imagination acts in symbolic perception by making the discursive understanding intuitive.<sup>734</sup> In an aesthetic context, this means that the understanding's competence in the categorical sorting and conceptual labelling of superficies, of the sensible surfaces that appear and interact in (Kantian) space and time, is supplemented or given depth in the creation and reception of poetry by an imaginative penetration of linguistic forms, giving them the fullness or 'plenitude of sense': breathing life into them. In this way a poem is only truly read when significant connotations are discovered by reading between the lines imaginatively, as it were.<sup>735</sup>

The ethical dimension of imaginative activity again emerges when we realise that such reading between the lines must not be an act of eisegetic distortion of the poetic communication, but rather a trustful and unbiased openness to the possibility of discovering new meaningfulness in attentive contemplation of the poem.<sup>736</sup> Only by attentive receptivity can imagination attain to the activity of symbolic discernment, creative invention and patient discovery thus being organically co-implicated. It is to explore further the nature of such ethico-aesthetic honesty that we now move.

#### **(4) Cassirer and Coleridge: aesthetic self-expression as objective honesty**

Through an analysis of what constitutes ethically honest art, we can arrive at grounds for discerning the difference between genuine expressivity in art and merely self-centred expressive self-indulgence. By pursuing this course in what follows, we should be able to gain insight into the possibility of a genuinely ethical form of romantic artistic expression, capable of intimating a revelation transcending the limits of conceptuality. It is as displaying just such a form of aesthetic openness that I am going to argue for Coleridge's aesthetic insight and poetic orientation. Such an ethico-aesthetic form of romantic poetics and poetic expression would also accord with Kierkegaard's existential concerns, thus opening up a framework of understanding in which justice could be done, in compatible ethico-aesthetic terms, to Kierkegaard's own need to communicate his religious message through an artistic indirection of language, which, problematically, he can find no place for in his own account of the role of imagination in the religious life. Such was the goal we set ourselves in chapter one. These ends will be arrived at through a highly relevant detour: the insight of Ernst Cassirer into romantically expressive aesthetics.

<sup>734</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, p. 69-70.

<sup>735</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, p. 69-70.

<sup>736</sup> Barth, *The Symbolic Imagination*, p. 45.

Cassirer suggests that true art can be neither subjective expression nor objective imitation, solely:

It is not enough to lay the stress on the emotional side of the work of art. It is true that all characteristic or expressive art is 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. But if we were to accept this Wordsworthian definition without reserve, we should only be led to a change of sign, not to a decisive change of meaning.<sup>737</sup>

Here Cassirer is making the point that if expressive art, as typified by lyrical poetry, is only concerned with the subjective side of the relationship between work and artist, content and form, then in fact the inadequate one-sidedness of a purely objective theory of art as imitation has not been overcome. Rather, that which is being objectified and imitated or described becomes the content of the artist's emotion. A psychological imitation is just as one-sided, and as much of an objectification, as the imitation of objective nature. As Cassirer puts it:

In this case art would remain reproductive; but, instead of being a reproduction of things, of physical objects, it would become a reproduction of our inner life, of our affections and emotions.<sup>738</sup>

Furthermore, he adds:

This is just as true of the specifically expressive arts as of the representative arts. Even in lyrical poetry emotion is not the only and decisive feature. It is of course true that the great lyrical poets are capable of the deepest emotions and that an artist who is not endowed with powerful feelings will never produce anything except shallow and frivolous art. But from this fact we cannot conclude that the function of lyrical poetry and of the arts in general can be adequately described as the artist's ability 'to make a clean breast of his feelings'.<sup>739</sup>

Crucial elements of genuinely expressive art are therefore bound up with formative interpretation, which will involve an emotional response as intrinsic to the interpretive and formative work, but which is not itself to be turned into an object of description. In focusing solely on subjective emotion, the artist or poet fails to express honestly the relationship in which he stands to his subject matter, and falls into mere sentimentality, which, in essence, is the potentially unethical enjoyment of one's own feelings for their own sake.<sup>740</sup> Good art

...is not simply [emotional] expression; it is also representation and interpretation. Not even a lyric poem is wholly devoid of this general tendency of art. The lyric poet is not just a man who indulges in displays of feeling. To be swayed by emotion alone is sentimentality, not art. An artist who is absorbed not in the

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<sup>737</sup> E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, (Newhaven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 141.

<sup>738</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 141.

<sup>739</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 142.

<sup>740</sup> See Roger Scruton, *Modern Culture*, (London: Continuum, 1998), pp. 55-67.



contemplation and creation of forms but rather in his own pleasure or in his enjoyment of ‘the joy of grief’ becomes a sentimentalist.<sup>741</sup>

Cassirer suggests that far from being mere self-indulgence, truly expressive art is concerned with what Jacques Maritain has described as ‘the good of the artwork’.<sup>742</sup>

Art is indeed expressive, but it cannot be expressive without being formative. And this formative process is carried out in a certain sensuous medium.<sup>743</sup>

Therefore, in truly expressing the relationship in which he stands to his subject-matter, the artist must combine both subjective and objective poles of experience in an imaginative balance, not allowing one to override the other. The focus thus expressed is the work of subjectively expressive art. Not the paint and canvas, or isolable words on paper (themselves part of the objective pole of the artistic or poetic relationship), but rather the interpretive whole, as subject and objective focus interact imaginatively, emerges as the imaginative unity that is an artwork. It should be noted here that an artwork is not a sublation or dissolving of subjective and objective aspects in a ‘higher third’, but an imaginatively sustained interaction of those aspects. It is not itself the sensuous medium (e.g. the paint and canvas), but exists in the imaginative relationship between artist and subject-matter, to be brought to life again in the aesthetic relationship of imaginative openness between viewer and sensory medium (e.g. painting on the gallery wall). In production and appreciation, therefore, the artwork is not reducible to either subjective or objective factors, but is sustained in the interaction of subjectivity and its object that is enabled through and as imaginative openness. The artwork in both cases is the fertile relation between the two poles of experience.

It is to just such a conception of the artwork that Kant points in his analysis of the aesthetic judgement or judgement of taste.<sup>744</sup> Such a judgement will not be objective (determining something about an object), but neither will it be merely subjective (saying something with no inter-subjective authority, but merely personal opinion). The Kantian judgement of taste is subjectively rational, and is thus accorded a conditional universality, such that whoever is led to experience the artwork under the appropriate interpretive conditions can be expected to come to the same judgement for himself. The value of the artwork, like the artwork itself, is thus an

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<sup>741</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 142. Sentimentality is looked at as an ethical danger in appendix 1. In what follows I will be using the term ‘pseudo-romanticism’, as introduced in chapter one, and as coined by Charles Williams in *The Figure of Beatrice*, (Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2005), to mark the essential contrast between a metaphysically intimate aesthetic creativity and emotional self-indulgence. This distinction is analysed in considerable depth in appendix 1. It will be recalled that the term has been applied in the same sense in the course of this thesis, with relation to the aesthetic position of the early Friedrich Schlegel, who, in my interpretation was shown to draw the criticism of both Hegel and Kierkegaard for the unethical implications of his romantic irony.

<sup>742</sup> See, for example: ‘...Art operates for the good of the work done, *ad bonum operis*, and everything which diverts it from that end adulterates and diminishes it’, J. Maritain, ‘Art and Scholasticism’, in *Art and Scholasticism with Other Essays*, J. F. Scanlan (tr.), (London: Sheed and Ward, 1930), p. 12.

<sup>743</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 141.

<sup>744</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 141.

interplay of subjective and objective factors, and exists only within such a relationship of subject to object, whilst being reducible to neither.

Summing up, then, the work is not the picture as an empirical object, or the words *per se*, independently of their organisation, in which the poet delivers his insights; rather, just as it is the *relation* between artist and ‘object’ that comes to imaginative fruition in the artwork, so the appreciation of that artwork is also a relational occurrence, not a thing: it is, or rather it emerges as a process, an imaginatively interpretive interaction between reader (or listener, or beholder) and what is read, heard or seen.

Cassirer contrasts Croce’s purely subjective understanding of artistic significance with his own conception of the artwork as a maintenance of imaginative tension between subject and object, (whether the artist and his subject matter, or the ‘audience’ and the empirical medium through which the artwork, as a dynamic relational imaginative event can be accessed):

In [Croce’s] theory the whole spiritual energy is contained and expended in the formation of the intuition alone. When this process is completed the artistic creation has been achieved. What follows is only an external reproduction which is necessary for the communication of the intuition but meaningless with respect to its essence.<sup>745</sup>

So the artwork is reduced by Croce to the subjective pole of experience, and the objective element is discounted by him in its essential role of cooperation in ‘co-forming’ the aesthetic, inter-relational expression which is the work of art as an intangible yet real, imaginative event. Moreover, in Cassirer’s reckoning Croce has also mistaken the identity of the objective aspect he discounts, by confusing an objective aspect of aesthetic experience with an *empirical object*, with the physical picture, for example, or the words (simply regarded as general terms), through which the painter’s or poets aesthetic insight is recorded for potential, and relational, imaginative mediation to a viewer/reader/listener. Cassirer writes on the objective element in art thus:

Like all the other symbolic forms art is not the mere reproduction of a ready-made, given reality. It is one of the ways leading to an objective view of things and of human life. It is not an imitation, but a discovery of reality. We do not, however, discover nature through art in the same sense in which the scientist uses the term ‘nature’.<sup>746</sup>

The difference between an empirical and an aesthetic approach to reality, according to Cassirer, follows, I would suggest, the distinction between the reality of conceptually irreducible

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<sup>745</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 141.

<sup>746</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 143.

qualitative significance and determinable or quantitative aspects of reality, as I have sought to draw this distinction in previous chapters, and especially with regard to the essentially qualitative nature of time, as distinct from its calculable, or quantitative, translation. ‘...[B]eauty as well as truth’, writes Cassirer,

may be described in terms of the same classical formula: they are a ‘unity in the manifold’. But in the two cases there is a difference of stress. Language and science are abbreviations of reality; art is an intensification of reality. Language and science depend on one and the same process of abstraction; art may be described as a continuous process of concretion.<sup>747</sup>

Cassirer thus distinguishes between modes of unification that pertain to qualitative and quantitative, or aesthetic and determinate approaches to nature, respectively.

This recalls to mind the distinction I have been making in this and the last chapter between Coleridge’s drive towards systematic conceptual completion as a metaphysician, and the uneasy relation that arises between this and his other, equally powerful, aesthetic insight into the conceptually irreducible or ‘esemplastic’ unity of a work of art, as achieved through the symbolically formative, but causally incalculable, activity of the imagination. Cassirer continues:

In our scientific description of a given object we begin with a great number of observations which at first sight are only a loose conglomeration of detached facts. But the farther we proceed the more these individual phenomena become a systematic whole. What science is searching for is some central features of a given object from which all its particular qualities may be derived... But art does not admit of this sort of conceptual simplification and deductive generalisation.<sup>748</sup>

Rather than searching out the causes of things,

[Art] gives us the intuition of the form of things. But this is by no mere repetition of something we had before. It is a true and genuine discovery.<sup>749</sup>

This discovery is essentially relational:

For the artist does not portray or copy a certain empirical object – a landscape with its hills and mountains, its brooks and rivers. What he gives us is the individual and momentary physiognomy of the landscape.<sup>750</sup>

This is to say, that the artist seeks the imaginative unification of the particular quality of an event of encounter within which he is related to his environment. The particular formative aspects thus evoked in imaginative relation to nature ‘are brought into the open and take on a

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<sup>747</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 143.

<sup>748</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 143.

<sup>749</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 143.

<sup>750</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 144.

definite shape'. Cassirer suggests that 'the revelation of this inexhaustibility of the aspects of things is one of the great privileges and one of the deepest charms of art'.<sup>751</sup>

As has become clear, Cassirer points out the distinction between an aesthetic and an empirical object in the Kantian terms with which we have become familiar; in terms, that is, of conceptually indeterminate, imaginative construal, as opposed to the conceptual determination of phenomena in terms of abstracted general features.

Compared to such a generalised empirical skeleton, reality as it is beheld aesthetically is interpretively open-ended: an indefinite richness of experience emerges through the encounter of subject and object, which is thus a *process* of construal to which no possible upper limit can be set, and which is therefore potentially infinite in insightful possibility. Such, as we have seen, is Kant's, and Coleridge's characterisation of the conceptual irreducibility of an aesthetic idea. As an emerging event of encounter between subjective and objective poles of experience, aesthetic reality is reducible neither to subjective nor objective terms of definite description.

In line with the argument I have been building throughout this thesis, I suggest that such an aesthetic event is an unfolding of metaphysical significance reducible neither to subjective nor objective terms exclusively, but an imaginatively mediated participation in the originating source of both subjectivity and objectivity. As an ongoing process, such aesthetic metaphysical insight is always intimate, and never final; which is to say that such insight cannot be encapsulated in determinate conceptual form, as the traditional teleological understanding in terms of final causality would suggest. Rather, as I have been arguing, such metaphysical intimation must be understood in terms of Kant's regulative 'aesthetic judgement', as distinct from his conception of regulative judgement in terms of teleology. Coleridge built on this Kantian basis in arriving at his conception of the transcendent idea, that it 'comes forth' through 'the moulds of the understanding' (empirical and transcendental concepts) 'in the disguise of two contradictory conceptions', but is in itself determinately 'inconceivable and inexpressible'. An idea can thus only be intimated or suggested through linguistic or poetic indirection.

As has been argued with reference to Coleridgean metaphysics, a teleological approach to creative origination in terms of final causality, whether in its 'dogmatic' or 'critical' post-Kantian forms, is blind to the dynamic nature of temporality, regarding time as intrinsically calculable, in terms of results that can be adequately predicted or determined in advance. I have been suggesting that divine creativity cannot be reducible to human instrumentality in this way. As has been established through attention to the work of Kant, Coleridge and Bergson, any

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<sup>751</sup> Cassirer, *An Essay on Man*, p. 144.

conception of the divine that so seeks to 'have God in its pocket' could only be idolatrous, as reducing the Creator to the level of the creature, or rather, and more accurately, by substituting a finite conceptual creature of the mind for a truly originating and transcendent, personal Creator.

In light of Cassirer, and in relation to Coleridge's own writings, I will be building in the rest of this chapter on the following conclusions. For Coleridge the poet and aesthete, the aesthetic event of a work of art, as mediated through imaginative symbols, is a conceptually indirect communication of metaphysical significance, and as such, emerges through an imaginatively productive interaction of subject and object. Such significance is not reducible to either of these two poles of experience, as coming to light by an activity of receptive participation in the imagination, as the formative power that constitutes both subjectivity and objectivity while transcending both. The aesthetic insight is thus a bringing to light through the imagination of the transcendent creative process in which we participate as creatures. Any possible communication of metaphysical insight will thus be non-objective, or aesthetically irreducible to conceptual definition. Therefore any insight into this trans-empirical creative process will be always in the aesthetic form of indeterminable, anticipatory glimpses into ontologically formative, or creative, processes, irreducible to Kantian schematised temporality, or to the intrinsically predictable, and causally linear teleology that Kant derived from this generalised basis. This conclusion will dominate my approach to Coleridgean intimations of transcendence through poetry and aesthetic insight as this chapter progresses.

#### **(5) Coleridge and Ponder-Life: how Coleridge envisages the productivity of imagination in action**

The crucial point brought to light by Cassirer, above, is the central role, in artistic production and appreciation, of a sustained balancing of subjective and objective aspects in the creation of a work of art: the productive, imaginatively mediated unity-in-tension of opposing poles of aesthetic experience which has been the focus of analysis in the last section. I now move my focus back onto Coleridge, to show how his theory of the nature of true poetry is inextricable from his own, more developed, account of *just how* such a sustained balancing of subjective and objective aesthetic elements as Cassirer points towards must be at work in the creative activity of any genuine poet.

For Coleridge, a true poem combines:

A more than ordinary sympathy with the object, emotions, or incidents contemplated by the poet, consequent on a more than common sensibility, with a more than ordinary activity of the mind in respect of the imagination. Hence is

produced a more vivid reflection of the truths of nature and the human heart, united with a constant activity [i.e. a unifying activity of imagination] modifying and correcting these truths by that sort of pleasurable emotion, which the exertion of all our faculties gives in a certain degree; but which can only be felt in perfection under the full play of those powers of mind, which are spontaneous rather than voluntary, and in which the effort required bears no proportion to the activity enjoyed.<sup>752</sup>

Here Coleridge is analysing the relation pertaining between subjectivity and objectivity in the course of aesthetic production. The conceptual faculty interacts with external nature through a highly stimulated sensibility under the unifying influence of imagination, imaginative activity both exciting and directing the understanding and the sensibility and responding to their various inputs. Imagination is thus the condition for, and medium of, a fruitful communion of subjective and objective elements of experience interacting in ‘full play’ (a metaphor related to imaginative activity derived from Kant’s account of aesthetic experience in terms of the ‘free play’ of imagination and conceptuality, as seen in chapter three).<sup>753</sup> Coleridge is describing an imaginative process of incremental and mutual stimulation of opposites poles of experience (subjective and objective), which following in the wake of Kant’s account of the transcendental imagination, is regarded as essentially organic, rather than mechanical, in structure.

The role of the productive imagination, for Coleridge as for Kant, is seen in terms of the unification and mediation of opposing poles, each contributing to the production of a whole which is reducible to neither. Importantly, in relation to my argument dissociating Coleridgean aesthetic insights from his systematic metaphysical programme, the imagination’s unifying productivity is regarded by Coleridge as a living tension of opposites in continuous interaction, not as a quasi-‘Hegelian’ sublation of opposites, that is, not a resolution in which the particularity of each is dissolved in a greater third (thesis/antithesis/synthesis). Rather, Coleridge’s position requires the continued particularity of character of each pole of experience for the production of a qualitatively distinct order of insight, reducible to neither subjective nor objective terms, while partaking of, but distinct from both.

In a fascinatingly original image to be found in chapter seven of his *Biographia Literaria*,<sup>754</sup> Coleridge provides an instructive emblem of the imagination.

Most of my readers will have observed a small water-insect on the surface of rivulets, which throws a cinque-spotted shadow fringed with prismatic colours on

<sup>752</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 3, ‘Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12’, in *Lectures on Literature, 1809-1819* part 1, pp. 217-18.

<sup>753</sup> Coleridge, Lecture 3, ‘Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles of Poetry, 1811-12’, in *Lectures on Literature, 1809-1819* part 1, pp. 217-18

<sup>754</sup> S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 124-5.

the sunny bottom of the brook, and will have noticed how the little animal *wins* its way up against the stream, by alternate pulses of active and passive motion, now resisting the current, and now yielding to it in order to gather strength and a momentary fulcrum for a further propulsion. This is no unapt emblem of the mind's self-experience in the act of thinking.<sup>755</sup>

In Ferreira's analysis of this passage, three elements are discerned.<sup>756</sup> Two of these seem accounted for by Coleridge: a voluntary movement and a passive utilisation of the backward motion of the current which provides a launching-off point for a further propulsion: '*reculer pour le mieux sauter*'. But what of any third element in the overall movement that is to symbolise the operation of the mind? We shall find out through what follows.

Coleridge in the same passage uses another example of the same tri-form process at work, in terms of what happens when we remember a name. Elsewhere, in a notebook entry, he describes that activity of recollection in terms of three components, and in the course of distinguishing 'mind' from 'consciousness' he suggests

there is a mystery in the sudden by-act-of-will-unaided, nay more than that, frustrated recollection of a name. I began with the Letters of the Alphabet – ABC &c. – and I know not why, felt convinced it began with H.<sup>757</sup>

Having 'run through all the vowels in combination with an initial 'H', and then in permutation with changes of consonants, Coleridge 'had completely given up'. Suddenly –

The name, Daniel, at once started up, perfectly insulated, without any the dimmest antecedent connection, as far as my consciousness extended.<sup>758</sup>

Presaging Freud,<sup>759</sup> (and echoing Schelling), the only conclusion Coleridge can draw to account for this, as a success that was paradoxically both sought for and entirely unintended and unexpected, is that mental activity cannot be limited to consciously directed acts alone, but must involve unconscious processes. We have seen in a recent quotation that Coleridge characterises such un-purposed, purposive activity as 'by-act-of-will-unaided', and he suggests, in reflecting on the mystery of recollection, that 'Consciousness' is merely 'the narrow neck of the bottle' of mind'.<sup>760</sup> All his conscious willing to remember, he suggests, served no other purpose than to stifle the desired recollection. In retrospect, Coleridge sees his striving after the name as:

uneasy motions...the craving to recollect it – but the very craving led the mind to a reach [in which] each successive disappointment (= a tiny pain) tended to contract

<sup>755</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 124-5.

<sup>756</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>757</sup> S. T. Coleridge, 'Mind Distinguished from Consciousness', in Kathleen Coburn (ed.) *Inquiring Spirit: a new presentation of Coleridge from his published and unpublished prose writings*, (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1951), pp. 30-1.

<sup>758</sup> Coleridge, in Coburn, *Inquiring Spirit*, pp. 30-1.

<sup>759</sup> As we saw earlier, Coleridge's thinking is here congruent with Schelling's construal of unconscious intelligence at work in the natural world, in the wake of Kant's characterisation of aesthetic activity as 'purposiveness without purpose'.

<sup>760</sup> Coleridge, in Coburn, *Inquiring Spirit*, pp. 30-1.

the orifice or *outlet* into consciousness. Well – it is given up – and all is quiet – the Nerves are asleep, or off their guard – and then the Name pops up, makes its way, and there it is! – not assisted by any association, but the very contrary – by the suspension and sedation of all associations<sup>761</sup>.

As in the case of Ferreira's analysis of the movement of the water-insect, three elements in the phenomenon of remembering are discernible here, and can guide us in discovering the third element in the movement of the little insect, that Ferreira also discerns.

Firstly, we have the fraught and purposive activity in which Coleridge sets his consciousness to work. Secondly, we have the postulation of an unconscious activity of mind, that *as* unconscious is unintended, as far as the will is concerned, but which, as purposive, or as tending towards the desired recollection, cannot be regarded as wholly undirected by intelligence. Thirdly, we have the name 'popping up' by pleasant surprise, catching him unawares, thus definitely unintentionally. The first element we could label as active, and as corresponding to the 'leap' of the water insect. The third element seems to correspond with the passivity in which the water-insect goes with the flow. The second element, however, is ambiguous, a purposive activity that is not purposed by the conscious will, and which might be described, therefore, as an active-passivity, or intelligence working without the conscious direction of the ego.

On Ferreira's reading of the 'water-insect' passage, just such an active-passivity is discernible, acting in the same way as the third element alongside activity and passivity in the analysis of remembering just given. A corresponding and paradoxical active-passivity is to be found in the insect's letting or allowing itself to succumb to the influence of the stream's current.<sup>762</sup>

In a similar image of Coleridge's, when a man leaps, gravity is at first resisted, and then utilised in landing at a further position.<sup>763</sup> The active-passivity of letting go here, as an intentional suspension of active resistance, completes the action of the leap. This sought-for third element, in all three of the Coleridgean images just discussed, corresponds to the nature of imagination that we have been discerning over the course of previous chapters. Remembering Ferreira's account of the role of imagination in Kierkegaard's writing, we now find the same features in Coleridge's conception of imagination as itself neither active nor passive, purely, but rather, in its 'suspension and sedation' of conscious willing, forming a productive medium that orchestrates the interaction of voluntary and mechanical aspects of thinking and perceiving.<sup>764</sup>

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<sup>761</sup> Coleridge, in Coburn, *Inquiring Spirit*, pp. 30-1.

<sup>762</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>763</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 124-5.

<sup>764</sup> Ferreira, *Transforming Vision*, p. 99.



The Coleridgean ‘leap’ of imaginative insight is thus structured similarly to the Kierkegaardian ‘leap’ of faith, as discussed in chapter one in terms of imaginative gestalt shifts.

According to Coleridge, the productive imagination thus works through a combining of opposite poles of experience, (subjective and objective, active and passive) that recalls the maintenance of an organism through the diastolic and systolic activity of a heart, each required by and intrinsically related to the other. As Coleridge puts it, the activity of imagination is ‘voluntary in part’<sup>765</sup> and yet ‘by-act-of-will-unaided’.<sup>766</sup> Similarly, at an earlier stage of this thesis, we discovered Kant’s artist of genius purposefully at work, and yet supremely receptive, ‘as if’ inspired by the creativity unconsciously active in nature.<sup>767</sup> Coleridge’s thinking on the subject of unconscious mentation also recalls Schelling’s conception of nature as unconsciously intelligent in its productive aspect or *natura naturans*,<sup>768</sup> as discussed in chapter three. So the Coleridgean creative imagination<sup>769</sup> – like the insect’s allowing itself to stop resisting the current as part of its strategy of moving against it – mediates the active and passive poles of the mind, while being reducible to neither. Discussing the empirical and mechanical faculty of association, Coleridge comments: ‘Fancy on the other hand has no counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space [...]’.<sup>770</sup>

In artistic creativity, therefore, this same productive imagination which is the transcendental condition of all self-conscious awareness, functions as the activity-in-passivity, or *purposive receptivity* to the artist’s subject-matter, which, as I shall argue in the next section, provides Coleridge with a key to the artwork’s potential to intimate transcendence to an ‘audience’ that must be equally attentive and receptive in its aesthetic appreciation. I have argued in this section and the last that an ethical element connecting the will and the imagination is essential to the difference between sentimentality and Coleridgean romantically expressive art.

We learned from Cassirer and Coleridge that all serious art is formative/interpretive as well as expressive, that the subjective pole of expression should not be allowed to eclipse the object of aesthetic regard – that which is to be expressed. This aesthetic tenet distinguishes Coleridge’s romanticism from that of Friedrich Schlegel, as implicitly criticised by Kierkegaard in *Either/Or*, as we discovered in chapter one. Kierkegaard saw the ethically relativist – indeed, nihilistic – implications of the kind of unbridled subjective expression of which Schlegel’s

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<sup>765</sup> Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* part 1, pp. 124-5.

<sup>766</sup> Coleridge, in Coburn, *Inquiring Spirit*, p.30.

<sup>767</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 46

<sup>768</sup> Schelling, *System of Transcendental Idealism*, for example, pp. xxix-xxx, pp. 49-50, 75, 215-228.

<sup>769</sup> In the sense distinguished in section 2 of this chapter, as covering both aesthetic and wider epistemological roles.

<sup>770</sup> Coleridge *Biographia Literaria* part 1, p. 304-6.

romantic irony is paradigmatic. Tested against such a paradigm, in light of Kierkegaard's criticism, Coleridgean symbols have now been shown to retain their integrity, emerging from the attentive, imaginative interaction of subject and object, while being reducible to or identifiable with neither.<sup>771</sup>

We have now seen how Coleridge's ethical approach to aesthetics accords with Cassirer's critical insights. For Coleridge, that which is expressed as an aesthetic representation or interpretation – remembering this is the artist's work, as distinct from the object to which the work is an aesthetic response – must be the focus of subjective expression. I have argued that such should be the criterion of any genuine (as opposed to sentimental and ultimately nihilistic) aesthetic. Kierkegaard's animosity to *all* purely artistic aesthetics is thus shown to be justifiable only against the Schlegelian model.<sup>772</sup>

We have learned, then, that one should not wallow in one's own emotional enjoyment of what is imaged, but that attention should be fixed on the intrinsic compositional demands of the artwork itself, that which Maritain similarly characterised as the 'good of the artwork'<sup>773</sup> (building a Christian aesthetic in the light of Thomas Aquinas' Aristotelianism). Paradoxically, building on the last two sections, I shall next be arguing that in an ethically genuine romantic-expressive art, as opposed to sentimental and purely subjective accounts of romanticism, what is figured or *present* to the artist or poet may often yield its deepest significance in terms of the transcendence whose *absence* it intimates.

## **(6) An ethical aesthetic of transcendence: a dialectic of imaginative presence in empirical absence**

I suggest in what follows that Coleridge's theory of symbolism is formulated in line with what I shall label a *dialectic of aesthetic presence in empirical absence*. I argue that, in Coleridge's view, a finite symbol is able to mediate infinite, divine creativity, as itself participating in that transcendence through the ethical nature of the imaginative, aesthetic activity which gave birth to it. I hope in this way to analyse the nature of Coleridgean aesthetic symbolism in terms other than the platonic doctrine of ontological participation often implied in his own accounts.

<sup>771</sup> In Charles Williams' *The Figure of Beatrice*, (see appendix one), an exegesis of Dante's *Comedia Divina*, the poetic symbol of Beatrice can lead Dante to God on account of his genuine loving attentiveness towards her. Beatrice matters to Dante precisely for and as herself, in her indelible uniqueness. Beatrice retains her integrity as the focus of Dante's pilgrim vision, and only by his lovingly attending to her can Beatrice become a luminous figure pointing Dante towards divinity and, correlatively, to his own true, redeemed selfhood. I suggest that Coleridge's symbols similarly retain their otherness in the aesthetic relation of subject and object.

<sup>772</sup> See chapter 1 section 2.

<sup>773</sup> Jacques Maritain, *Art and Scholasticism*, p. 6.

The symbol mediates transcendence, for Coleridge, as *pars pro toto*: through the participation of the finite phenomenon in a metaphysical form or idea. But this does not mean that the artist or his audience can regard the symbol as a mere instrument, as a convenience. Rather, in line with the insights of Coleridge and Cassirer as discussed in the last sections, the symbol's ability to mediate transcendence demands an imaginative attitude of will: an attitude of attentive receptivity,<sup>774</sup> or in other words, an ethically specific stance of openness; a hospitable receptivity of the subject in relation to the object, whether that subject be the poet seeking symbolic insight through his subject matter, or the reader who would try to participate in the insight thus gained by the poet.

My argument in this section is that an ethical and imaginative 'condition of possibility' (as it were) is intrinsic to such aesthetic, symbolising activity and that it is only through attention to the present object that an intimation both of its own and its attentive perceiver's transcendent origins and 'goal', may supervene. Such a dawning of trans-empirical awareness would thus be dependent upon, yet irreducible to this imaginatively mediated interaction between an aesthetic focus or 'object' of subjective regard and an ethically disinterested personal act imaginative attention.

Thus I begin to set forth, in this and the next section, a process of argument through which I shall arrive at the stated aim of my thesis: the discovery of an aesthetic of transcendent intimation that meets Kierkegaard's paradoxical theological criteria. In doing so, I will be building on the Kantian framework laid out in chapters three and four, as this is the context to which Coleridge's thinking responds. As such, I submit that this is also a theoretical context (as duly criticised in terms of Bergsonian temporality) which can offer the possibility of a genuine reconciliation of Kierkegaard's aesthetic practice with his own theological aims.

As seen in the last chapter, Coleridge writes in response to the Kantian ban on direct theoretical access to transcendence via the conceptuality of the understanding, and whole-heartedly embraces Kant's insight into the subject's active but transcendental role in the construction of self-conscious awareness. Kant writes to counter Hume much as Coleridge is at odds with the prevalence of the whole British empiricist tradition, as virtually universally accepted in the English intellectual environment in which he dwelt. So, Coleridge is pursuing his own aims through Kantian terminology, in reaction to and in terms of Kantian conceptuality.

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<sup>774</sup> In this regard, I would cite William James on his perception of the relation between will and decision, on asking the rhetorical question 'in what does a moral act consist?' James declares 'you can make only one reply. You can say that *it consists in the effort of attention by which we hold fast to an idea* [James's italics] which but for effort of attention would be driven out of the mind by the other psychological tendencies that are there', and further on, he writes: 'Our acts of voluntary attention, brief and fitful as they are, are nevertheless momentous and critical, determining us, as they do, to higher or lower destinies'. William James, *Talks to Teachers on Psychology*, (London: Longman's Green & Co., 1924).

Kantianism (and developments from it) is also the broad framework or environment through which Kierkegaard met and responded to romantic and Hegelian thought. Thus I am aiming to re-interpret the relationship between romanticism and existentialism through two key representatives of these movements, respectively, using Kantianism as a conceptual frame of reference that is common to both as a means to mediate a rapprochement between them. Kierkegaard's position as I understand it has been laid out in chapter one, to which the argument now presented is a response. It is important above all to recognise, in relation to what follows, that Ferreira's interpretation of the Kierkegaardian response to faith, as analysed in the second chapter, has equipped us with a model argument for the rational, or non-fideistic nature of a subjective faith-commitment, as imaginative activity, while in tension with the understanding, does not abolish or ride rough-shod over its logical authority. Rather the imagination is shown to follow a discernible pattern of activity, an intelligibility of its own, which we have seen in subsequent discussions to be organic in nature. On this basis, I argue that an imaginatively driven, or aesthetic perception which intimates transcendence through a Coleridgean symbolisation of the sublime has a rational status, and is not merely a fideistic and merely subjective wish-fulfilment.<sup>775</sup>

Once again, (as I would like to be as clear as possible at this important juncture), I am suggesting that focal attentiveness to an object of aesthetic regard, in the imaginatively mediated interaction of objective properties with subjective faculties – (following Kant's aesthetic) through suggestive or indeterminate conceptuality – enables the indefinite, supra-phenomenal 'more' of the object to be communicated, (or, in terms of Coleridge's Christian faith, its createdness), since such imaginatively mediated interpretation is intrinsically open-ended, as conceptually indeterminable. As imaginative, and so resistant to finite determination, participative interaction of the subject in the aesthetic manifestation of the object tends to the infinite, so that the object reveals indefinitely more to the aesthetic gaze than its merely empirical presence.

In the aesthetic relation thus established, therefore, imaginative and thus intrinsically open-ended interpretation of the object, as that which is phenomenally present – as an appearance, therefore – allows aesthetic but indeterminate insight into that phenomenon's supra-phenomenal basis, or in the terms of Christian faith through which a Coleridge would approach that phenomenon, its creative origins, on the basis of faithful attentiveness. What becomes available to imaginative vision, therefore, is aesthetic insight into the object as a creature. Indeed, through

<sup>775</sup> In Alvin Plantinga's epistemological terms (although with no relation to his argumentation) I am suggesting that an aesthetically symbolic intimation of transcendence through sublimity can be 'properly basic'. See Alvin Plantinga, 'Reason and Belief in God', in Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (ed.), *Faith and Rationality*, (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

the mutual and imaginative interaction of the subject with the object, it emerges that both object and subject are united in a shared origination, that both are creatures.

As has been shown, a rational account of imaginative activity is offered by Kant, and developed by Coleridge. Also we have seen with Ferreira, in chapter two, how imagination never loses touch with rationality in Kierkegaardian faith's 'surrender of the understanding', while at the same time playing a unique but intelligible role of its own in relation to a rationally inscrutable 'object' of revelation. I suggest on this basis that an interpretation such as I have just outlined does not represent mere relativism or fideism. In Kant's terminology, we could describe such an intimation of transcendence through the phenomenal as subjectively rational: given the appropriate frame of interpretive reference, anyone could be expected to share in such an aesthetic encounter. However, the association of phenomenal transcendence with createdness would be dependent on a prior Christian faith. Thus, as we learned from Kierkegaard and Ferreira, its recognition would be dependent on a prior commitment to an objectively paradoxical revelation, wholly beyond the reach of reason. But Ferreira has shown grounds for the rationality of the role of imagination in the faith-relation, from the perspective of revelation's subjective reception. Indeed, an imaginatively interpretive stance to the world around one is seen by Ferreira as a key condition to Kierkegaard's second immediacy, as one perceives the ordinary world from the perspective of faith, and thus in its aspect of createdness.

In the Coleridgean aesthetic relation, imaginative symbols intimate a transcendence that cannot be grasped in either the subjective or objective terms *per se* whose dynamic interaction, in which each pole of consciousness retains its integrity, is nevertheless a process leading to the symbolic insight. Through such sustained imaginative activity, a view of the world is made available that would suggest, aesthetically, that this world is not the value-free or neutral and atomistic order that an empiricist positivism would suggest. Under a certain ethical condition of focussed and faithful subjective attentiveness to the present object – an ethical *as* aesthetic condition – that same object is revealed as created, as indirectly intimating its transcendent origins through its infinite aesthetic interpretability. Under the ethico-aesthetic conditions in which the present object appears in this aspect, the world ceases to seem a value-neutral order, but appears a living creature.

The object cannot reveal this aspect unilaterally, as the holy, the creative, is accessible only to a certain, ethically and imaginatively receptive mode of subjective approach. Both subject and object, as the aesthetic interpretation would reveal, are creatures, and thus share a common source, a common 'life', while each has its own, particular value and inherent organisation, (as we have seen Coleridge affirm earlier in this chapter). Each is thus also an integrity, a unity in

its own right. It is only through their aesthetic relationship that this deepening of the subject's perception of himself and his objective environment is possible. Each pole, subjective and objective, thus imaginatively mediates the intensification of awareness of the other.<sup>776</sup>

Next we must investigate the precise nature of this symbolism as envisaged by Coleridge, in order to locate it philosophically. It will be found to pertain to a central aesthetic concept for Coleridge: the sublime. In addressing the specifically ethical nature of aesthetic sublimity as Coleridge understands it, we will arrive at a deeper appreciation of the theological importance of the Coleridgean symbol. It was suggested in chapter six that the symbol-making function of imagination is responsible for the aesthetic perception of the ideal, as Coleridge understands it, and to this, Raymonda Modiano would add that the perception of ontologically creative, divine ideas, as symbolically mediated, is in itself a perception of the sublime.<sup>777</sup>

Modiano writes on Coleridge's symbols in relation to the topic of the sublime in the context of Coleridge's aesthetics. Importantly, Modiano equates sublimity, as Coleridge understands it, with his theory of symbolism, which we have been addressing in this chapter in relation to our concern with a concept of ethico-aesthetic experience.<sup>778</sup> Thus, by focusing on Modiano in this regard at this point, we will learn that Coleridge's understanding of the nature of imaginative symbolism is drawn from the kind of ethico-aesthetic experience that has been under discussion in this chapter, and which Coleridge himself deemed sublime. An important step will thus be gained, since we will be able to see that the kind of ethico-aesthetic experience capable of intimating transcendence, which has been under discussion, can be aesthetically evaluated and conceptualised in terms of the sublime. Moreover, it will be discovered that Coleridge's experience-based conception of sublimity, as thus an intrinsically ethical aesthetic concept, is importantly non-Kantian, and represents an authentic and distinctively Coleridgean development away from Kantian premisses.<sup>779</sup>

Unlike Coleridge, Kant bases his concept of sublimity on the failure of imagination in downright and violent confrontation with appearances in nature and art threatening to

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<sup>776</sup> Recalling Colin Gunton's view of the nature of the relationship within the Trinity, and that of the world to the trinity, one might say that each phenomenal individual or unity, as described in this paragraph, is a unity in dependence, each receiving its own, genuine identity through its relationship to otherness, or perichoretically. This expression signifies that being is communicated mutually, that individuals genuinely exist, but only through and by their relation to others. For Gunton, The life of the Trinity is itself perichoretic and the same theological concept of mutually responsive individuation through ontological relationship suggests the nature of extra-trinitarian creativity: the world exists only through grace, or in and through the love which enables that world by granting it, through its human representatives, the freedom to respond in love: the perichoretic love which, as self-giving, is paradoxically the source of all true, personal identity, human or divine. Such a model of ontological participation is, I suggest, preferable, both theologically and philosophically, to Coleridge's tendency to express his insight into aesthetic ideas in quasi-platonic terms, and certainly preferable to his systematic vision of the metaphysical unity of individuals in terms of a pantheistic, differentiated identity of Being. See Colin Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 152-3, 163-79.

<sup>777</sup> Raymonda Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, (London: Macmillan, 1985).

<sup>778</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 117.

<sup>779</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 114.

undermine its empirical, schematising power.<sup>780</sup> The Coleridgean sublime, on the other hand, is in a qualitative or aesthetic unity with his concept of beauty, and not opposed to it (as is the case with Kant).<sup>781</sup> In the manifestation of aesthetic ideas of genius, which was discussed in chapter four, Kant identifies a symbolic mode of what he labels imaginative ‘hypotyposis’ with the perception of aesthetic beauty through the pure judgement of taste.<sup>782</sup>

Hypotyposis is the process through which concepts are rendered or construed as representable in sensory terms by the imagination. Hypotyposis thus takes two forms: the schematic and conceptually determinate, (with which we are familiar from chapter three and subsequently), and the symbolic, or conceptually indeterminate mode of imaginative mediation of beautiful aesthetic ideas in great works of art, as discussed in chapter four.<sup>783</sup> However, unlike Coleridge, Kant confines the symbolising function of imaginative hypotyposis to judgements of beauty exclusively, contrasting this role with the failure of imagination in its non-aesthetic, or empirically schematic mode of hypotyposis, in the apprehension of the sublime. The Kantian sublime is a failure of imagination’s schematising power when confronted by appearances suggestively leading the imagination towards the incalculable. The Kantian sublime is thus that which quantitatively transcends imagination’s power of empirical schematism, as essentially a mode of uniting sensory materials through comparability in quantitative terms (as we found in relation to Kant’s schema of number in chapter three).

A Kantian judgement of sublimity is thus based on an imaginative activity, but as a thought, an ethically oriented, but non-aesthetic comparison, born of the self-awareness of the ethical subject in his relation to a moral absolute or categorical imperative: the thought that his or her status as a moral being infinitely transcends and overcomes the empirically un-processable phenomena which lead the imagination towards a rationally inassimilable abyss threatening to engulf the finite, phenomenal ego.<sup>784</sup> As against this collapse of the imagination in the face of the quantitatively transcendent and paradoxical, Coleridge offers an aesthetic of sublimity as the imagination’s journey into qualitative self-transcendence, whilst remaining in harmonious continuity with an appreciation of aesthetic beauty.<sup>785</sup> It will be seen that the Coleridgean sublime is an intimation of transcendence through a progressive and deepening awareness of aesthetic beauty, or of the trans-empirical profundity that enables the beautiful, in nature and art.<sup>786</sup> This apprehension of sublimity may be entertained through imaginative symbolism, but remains conceptually ungraspable or indeterminable. So, we will see that Coleridge’s doctrine

<sup>780</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 108, 124.

<sup>781</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 114.

<sup>782</sup> Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, pp. 231-2.

<sup>783</sup> Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, pp. 231-2.

<sup>784</sup> Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, § 23, § 27.

<sup>785</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 114.

<sup>786</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 114.

of symbolism is born of an imaginative apprehension of an intrinsically unclassifiable quality of sublimity, which, as thus conceptually unclassifiable, is therefore of the same order as Kierkegaard's imaginatively-fuelled existential relation to the paradox of the unobjectifiable God-man, as discussed in chapter two.

Modiano suggests that Coleridge re-thinks the aesthetic of the sublime in faith-based, non-Kantian terms. She claims that Coleridge re-assessed the relationship between beauty and sublimity, which are totally distinct for Kant, on the basis of faith, and that he came to see the two terms as continuous. Coleridge writes:

We call an object sublime in relation to which the exercise of comparison is suspended: while on the contrary that object is most beautiful, which in its highest perception sustains while it satisfies the comparing power [...] though a beautiful object may excite and be made the symbol of an Idea that is truly [sublime].<sup>787</sup>

A sublime object could be beautiful in its own right and a beautiful object appear sublime, since objects are envisaged by Coleridge primarily in terms of their created status, on the basis of his Christian faith. This implies that the beauty of an object properly pertains to that object, as distinct from perhaps that same object under conditions in which it excites the feeling of sublimity, remembering that the experience of sublimity involves the object's relationship to a subject through a symbol of transcendence, reducible to neither term. As a judgement related to and proceeding from faith, the sublimity of an object is attributed to it by the subject. '[T]he difference of the Sublime and the Beautiful is a *diversity* [...] I meet, I find the beautiful – but I give, contribute, or rather attribute the Sublime'.<sup>788</sup>

I would suggest that the difference in one object between the perception of beauty and the attribution of holiness resides in the emphasis, or direction of focus, either subjective or objective, within the imaginative relation. This in turn suggests that the 'fusion' of which Coleridge speaks with reference to the subject and the aesthetic object is not to be conceived as one of complete identification, or Hegelian sublation, since each term must be sufficiently distinct for a shift of emphasis between the two to be possible. An object might be perceived as beautiful, but seen through the eyes of faith it might also – in the transforming medium of imagination, and in relation to an attentive subject – become a symbol of holiness, and thus sublime. One might say that Coleridge re-conceives the sublime in terms of the symbolic manifestation of the beauty of holiness.

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<sup>787</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 118.

<sup>788</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 118, Coleridge's italics.



As was suggested above, subject and object may be experienced as sharing in one life and yet also as particulars in their own right precisely on this foundation of faith in a Creator. Modiano holds that it is on the basis of his faith and, as we have seen from Lipkowitz, it is in relation to his interest in the issue of biblical poetics, that Coleridge constructs his symbolic theory. To place more clearly before the mind the meaning of a symbol as Coleridge understands it, I will quote from his work, *The Statesman's Manual*:

It is among the miseries of the present age that it recognises no medium between the literal and the metaphorical. Faith is either to be buried in the dead letter, or its name and honours usurped by a counterfeit product of the mechanical understanding, which in the blindness of self-complacency confounds symbols with allegories. Now an allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language, which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; the principal being more worthless even than its phantom proxy, both alike unsubstantial, and the former shapeless to boot. On the other hand a symbol (*ho estin aei tautegoricon*) [‘which is always tautegorical’, meaning here, that the symbol is a finite, aesthetically mediated participation in the infinite creativity of an Idea] is characterised by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal. It partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part of that unity of which it is the representative.<sup>789</sup>

According to Coleridge’s theory, as we stated it in chapter six, a symbol is mediated through the imagination’s activity of uniting subject and object, while maintaining an awareness of the distinctness of each. Lipkowitz suggests that this is why Coleridge regards the symbol as occupying a position between the literal and the metaphorical or allegorical.<sup>790</sup> Modiano’s nuanced account further suggests that ‘the sublime, like the Coleridgean symbol, is a relational term, which, like a discreet ray of light, merely maps out a path of travel, a point of destination, not one of arrival’.<sup>791</sup> This is important as suggesting the kind of intimation which I am arguing to be of the essence of Coleridge’s romantic poetic insight into transcendence. Modiano writes: ‘for Coleridge, the sublime object appears to be an invitation to an experience of transcendence’.<sup>792</sup> Conceptual indistinctness, and indeed the visual indistinctness of the object are crucial to such an intimation of transcendence. Coleridge noted an awareness of sublimity on visiting a cathedral as possessing just these conditions:

<sup>789</sup> Coleridge, *The Statesman's Manual*, appendix C, p. 30.

<sup>790</sup> Lipkowitz, ‘Inspiration and the Poetic Imagination’, pp. 618-19.

<sup>791</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 121.

<sup>792</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 116.

On entering a cathedral, I am filled with devotion and with awe; I am lost to the actualities that surround me, and my whole being expands into the infinite; earth and air, nature and art, all swell up into eternity, and the only sensible impression left is, 'that I am nothing'.<sup>793</sup>

But as Modiano writes, citing Wlecke, this feeling of nothingness is in fact itself a fulfilment of the subject's true identity:

The term 'nothing' does not 'deny the existing reality of the "I", but merely indicates that the self 'now lacks the means to define itself as any precisely limited "thing"'.<sup>794</sup>

This, I would suggest, signifies that as well as the boundaries of the object (in this case, the surrounding cathedral) the boundaries of the self have become ill-defined through the sublime intimation of a transcendent origin or horizon towards which both subject and object are moving, or from which they came, or both. And as Modiano suggests, the intimation of transcendence is incremental, gradual.<sup>795</sup> An intensification of the indistinct awareness, not in terms of clarity, but depth, is implied. The dawning awareness of transcendence is therefore processive, and never an accomplishment. Coleridge writes that the sublime experience 'tends to expand indefinitely, seeking a unity which it [the mind] feels but cannot perceive, until it is lost in a sort of pleasing bewilderment in intuitions of endless power and greatness'.<sup>796</sup> This awareness of incalculable process suggests that Coleridge's aesthetic is imbued with a 'durational' understanding of time, as distinct from the spatialised understanding that pervades his systematic work. I shall return to this issue of the processive nature of symbolic perception soon, but for now I will mark the importance of this dynamic, temporal dimension to the Coleridgean aesthetics of transcendence, by attempting to situate it, in a short summary paragraph of progress so far, before deepening my line of argument for an aesthetic dialectic of the intimated presence of transcendence in its empirical absence in Coleridge's thought, through closer attention to its theological implications, in a new section.

To sum up progress so far at the end of this section, I am suggesting that in Coleridge's aesthetics, the attitude of will manifest in an imaginative tension of active and passive poles must hold both subjective and objective poles of expression and expressed in a tensile unity: a unity of opposites, but not an identification such as would dissolve the difference between subject and object in a higher resolution. Such resolution, the resolution of absolute idealism, can achieve no genuinely transcendent insight, as it can only be brought about on the conceptual

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<sup>793</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 122.

<sup>794</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 122.

<sup>795</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 119.

<sup>796</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 119.

level, by forgetting one's own historical location as a living and necessarily incomplete human being, whose selfhood is not ideally closed in or finished. As Kierkegaard also suggests, such merely conceptual sublation is blind to genuine otherness, to genuine transcendence, because it confuses ideality, infinite human potentiality in thought, for eternal, divine actuality. Coleridge's thinking relating to his experience of the sublime would suggest just such an awareness as Kierkegaard's of unfinished and living process. Through Coleridge's symbolically mediated intimations of sublimity, he understands his own finitude to be engaged, in union with the world around him, on an indefinable journey to a goal which is also a source. But this 'goal' is such that it does not delimit the journey through time, but deepens into an awareness of infinity into which even one's own particularity becomes blurred. Yet such blurring is in effect not a negating of the self, but a dawning recognition of its infinite relational significance, as a fellow creature.

**(7) The time of the aesthetic will: Bergsonian implications of Coleridge's symbolic process as the intimation of the sublime**

It may be advisable, before proceeding further, to remind ourselves of the grounds on which Bergson criticises traditional teleology. I take this step because it will be found, in what follows here, that a dynamic or quasi-'Bergsonian' account of time is central to the theological importance of Coleridge's creative stance, according to the account of his aesthetic writings as put forward in this chapter.

In chapter four, it was shown that, unlike the model of final causality analysed and utilised by Kant, Bergson maintains his thesis of creative duration allows room for genuine novelty to arise in the universe. Creation is intrinsically unpredictable, for Bergson, whereas explanation in terms of final causes always presupposes a goal to be arrived at through premeditated planning. For Bergson, teleological planning has evolved in human beings as a requirement for successful adaptation to the obstacles inherent in our environment. We calculate our course through life by utilising what we find lying around us as means for proposed ends. Teleological causality thus selectively adapts pre-existent matter to suit our plans, and is not ontologically creative.

The ability to project plans implies that we are working practically and habitually with a spatialised or Kantian conception of time, i.e., one that sees time as laid out all at once, like a cloth over a table. Just as the tablecloth is woven to a uniform pattern from one material, such that one end is homogeneously continuous with the other, so our spatialised conception of time is a 'schema' or instrument, abstracted from the reality of an essentially heterogeneous and concrete productive flow. The next moment can never be a repetition of its predecessor, as

intrinsically modified by it. What is quantitatively repeatable in calculative abstraction is really and in itself an intrinsically an infinitely diversifying growth of qualitative uniqueness.

We have seen both Bergson and the Schelling of the *Transcendental Idealism* focusing on a qualitative uniqueness of experience that cannot be contained in the quantifying, conceptual net of mechanistic Enlightenment thought. But we have also seen Bergson going a stage further.

For Bergson, time is not schematically predictable in essence. There are no separate instants in the flow of time, (that is, before the instrumental understanding sets to work on it). Rather, the future will be modified by what has gone before, as well as modifying what preceded it.<sup>797</sup> This is in line with what we have discovered of the corrigibility and the temporal perspective within which Coleridge's symbols emerge through an imaginatively mediated process.

While Kant's concept of the organic focuses on a mutually constitutive interdependency of whole and parts, I have argued that Bergson deepens this static analysis of an organism, by regarding organic form as productive of itself over time.<sup>798</sup> Wholeness, in Bergson, is always emerging through ever wider interconnectedness in the process that is dynamic reality.<sup>799</sup> Forms are never fixed as metaphysical particulars, or atoms, save in the isolating and labelling work of the understanding that is imposed on the flow of creativity, or cut out of it for purely practical aims. Bergson's concept of the organic goes far beyond Kant's by taking time into account, becoming the basis of a fundamental ontological process that is radically self-transformative: what existed yesterday takes on a new complexion in the light of a today which it in turn has uniquely modified.<sup>800</sup>

According to the romantic and idealist model of metaphysical process, of which the most notable instance is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (as briefly described in chapter one), it is true that what is revealed at the culmination of the philosophical system transforms the complexion of the passage that has been taken towards it. But the difference from Bergson's durational approach lies in the nature of the transformation envisaged. Hegel's, or, as we discovered in chapter six, Coleridge's metaphysically transformative process moves according to a goal that is pre-conceived by the philosopher before he sets out. The ultimate goal is always at the disposal of the thinker, as he constructs the teleological artefact that is the philosophical system. This is as if ultimate destiny could be carried around in the philosopher's head as a blueprint, in the form of a conceptual method, regardless of the fact that the thinker is a living

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<sup>797</sup> See, for example, Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 1-12.

<sup>798</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 318-19.

<sup>799</sup> Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>800</sup> Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, pp. 23-4.

being with only a limited and transient access to the world around him and, indeed, only an ever-approximating understanding of himself, as he grows and changes over time.

Philosophical thinking, however, depends on the philosopher, who is an existing subject. We have seen in chapter one how Kierkegaard had the originality to notice what was so close and so obvious that it had always escaped philosophical attention: that human existence is a process of personal development, an ongoing task that is inscrutable and lost sight of as long it is regarded as amenable to objective definition. How much less then, as Kierkegaard understood, can any objectively ‘final’ philosophy adequately translate, let alone improve upon (as Hegel contended), the process of growth that is personal Christian faith?

Independently of this judgement of Coleridge’s teleological metaphysics, I have also suggested throughout this chapter that such strictures do not apply to the truly open-ended nature of certain forms of romantic aesthetic practice, such as I have tried here to show Coleridge’s to be (as distinct from his ‘totalising’ philosophy that seeks to subsume unique, creative activity within the confines of his over-arching conceptual method). Therefore I suggest that the radical unpredictability of Bergson’s non-teleological conception of organic process – which in effect conceives of living process in terms of Kant’s doctrine of aesthetic judgement, rather than his account of teleological judgement<sup>801</sup> – is a more adequate model of time than Kant’s for elucidating the metaphysical implications of Coleridge’s aesthetic intimations of transcendence; of the experience of symbols of the sublime. At bottom, this amounts to a recognition that such an aesthetic intimation of transcendence is a matter of incalculable or unquantifiable, qualitative growth, a movement into relationship, and that such a personal response to the appeal of divine love cannot be schematised or controlled.

Therefore I suggest that Bergson’s approach to the issue of temporal dynamics is, theologically, preferable to an idealist teleological tendency to pre-judge its subject-matter according to a prior conception or aim, deciding what can and cannot count as ontological possibilities from a purely conceptual point of view. This is because of what we have learned from Kierkegaard, in chapters one and two. There it was found that the ‘scandal of particularity’, the inextricable paradox of the Christian revelation of transcendent and personal salvation, is precisely *not* knowledge *a priori*: not what one could always already have given oneself in advance, and on this issue it has emerged that I side with Kierkegaard’s criticism of romantic and idealist ‘aestheticism’ against the metaphysics of Coleridge.<sup>802</sup>

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<sup>801</sup> See chapter 4 section 3.

<sup>802</sup> Although as I have suggested, the aestheticism Kierkegaard attacks might more properly be labelled ‘pseudo-romantic’.

## **(8) Thesis Conclusion**

The overall vantage-point in the cumulative argument that we have gained through the last two chapters, and in light of the previous five, can be summarised in a few paragraphs as follows.

Coleridge's conception of the aesthetic relation is ethical. In his aesthetic writing, he does not seek to interpret the relationship between creatures and God through an objectively systematic use of conceptuality *a priori*, an interpretation in which the nature of anything is pre-determined by, or in which everything is reducible to the philosopher's conceptual scheme, a scheme which is imposed on his subject matter in advance. In a metaphysical system, logical necessity dictates the way in which God, the world and human being may be conceived as one. Coleridge himself sees this:

The inevitable result of all consequent Reasoning, in which the Intellect refuses to acknowledge a higher or deeper ground than it can itself supply, and weens to possess within itself the centre of its own system is – and from Zeno the Eleatic to Spinoza and from Spinoza to the Schellings, the Okens, and their adherents of the present day, ever has been – PANTHEISM under one or other of its modes [...] <sup>803</sup>

...the Dialectic Intellect by the exertion of its own powers exclusively can lead us to a general affirmation of the Supreme Reality, of an *absolute* Being. But here it stops. It is utterly incapable of communicating insight or conviction concerning the existence or possibility of the World, as different from Deity... <sup>804</sup>

I suggest that Coleridge, in his systematic work tries to avoid this pantheistic or panentheistic result by situating his *a priori* speculation in the context of conscience, treated as a postulate that, as such, cannot be proved, but depends for its acceptance on the introspection of the reader. In his *Opus Maximum*, Coleridge calls the reader to bear an internal witness to his claim for the reality of a personal will answerable to conscience, as present to the mind but not of it. I discussed this concept of conscience as an immanent divine alterity in chapter six, <sup>805</sup> but went on to criticise the *a priori* logic in terms of which it is developed systematically. <sup>806</sup> Coleridge asserts it would be irrational on this basis to deny the existence of an infinite ethical will as the source of conscience and, concomitantly, of the finite will's sense of responsibility. This, he claims, is on the grounds that to deny the actuality of a possibility, without which the acknowledged reality of something else becomes impossible, is irrational. <sup>807</sup>

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<sup>803</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 106-7.

<sup>804</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, p. 104. Coleridge's italics.

<sup>805</sup> See chapter 6 section 2.2.

<sup>806</sup> See chapter 6 section 3.

<sup>807</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 20, 54-5.

Unfortunately, I have found reason, in the last chapter, to suggest that Coleridge's devise of situating his systematic speculation in the context of a moral postulate did not achieve the freedom from pantheistic implications which he intended. As I have suggested, the problem lies not in his ethical postulate, but in the dialectical logic by which he conceives, speculatively, the relation of creator to creature. Even the presence of a moral postulate as justification for further *a priori* speculation cannot validate a speculation which departs from this basis by contradicting it through its implications of conceptual determinism. Just such a departure, I suggest, is what is implicit in the logic of differentiated identity governing the relation of will to conscience.<sup>808</sup> The same dialectic governs Coleridge's account of God in terms of the development of concepts of potentiality and actuality out of an underlying concept of reality.<sup>809</sup> Dialectical logic thereby determines the relation of the created to the divine, as based on an all encompassing ground of absolute power from which his trinitarian God and creaturely existences are both derived, in differentiated identity.<sup>810</sup>

But what we have found in previous sections of this chapter is that, in his aesthetic thinking, Coleridge conceives the aesthetic relation of subject and object in terms of an imaginative mediation through which disinterested attentiveness to the object for its own sake, or in its own alterity, enables the un-pre-thinkable and corrigible perception of a shared, creative derivation of both subject and object.<sup>811</sup> This intrinsically relational derivation is also an infinitely open-ended, processive and transcendent 'goal', as intimated through aesthetic ideas as symbols of the sublime. The aesthetic intimation of such relatedness might be taken as a created echo of trinitarian relatedness, as hinted above.<sup>812</sup> For aesthetic purposes, and as a man of faith, Coleridge stops here. Creaturely individuality is here dependent on an ultimately divine process of self-giving or empowerment, and is thus irreducible to the kind of pantheistic conceptual determination by which beings, divine and human are treated as effectively no more than conceptual counters, or mere determinate modes of an all-encompassing and abstract concept of reality.

I offer the cumulative argument of this chapter as the basis for a rapprochement between Kierkegaardian faith and romantic aesthetics. Kierkegaard had denied a role to artistic imagination in the Christian/paradoxical sphere of existence, and yet needed such imagination in order to communicate, necessarily indirectly, the possibility of paradoxical faith. My claim is that Coleridge's romantic intimation of transcendence, through aesthetic symbols of the

<sup>808</sup> Coleridge, 'Essay on Faith', in *Shorter Works and Fragments* part 2, pp. 333-44.

<sup>809</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 226-7.

<sup>810</sup> Coleridge, *Opus Maximum*, pp. 231-2.

<sup>811</sup> Modiano, *Coleridge and the Concept of Nature*, p. 119.

<sup>812</sup> In light of this possibility, it might be tentatively suggested that perhaps a theology of creation – in terms of perichoretic *vestigia trinitatis* – could be developed on the basis of findings of this thesis in this respect.

sublime, embodies the same imaginative practices as the indirect communication utilised by Kierkegaard to promote a living encounter with paradoxical revelation in personal life. I have shown that there can be discerned a shared ethical shape between the positions of Coleridge and Kierkegaard. A pattern of openness to the manifestation of genuine, creative alterity in Coleridge's romantic aesthetic is mirrored by Kierkegaard's imaginative receptivity to the revelation of the God-man. We have seen that Coleridge's aesthetic receptivity to sublime symbols of transcendence is born through a sustained act of attention to objects of imaginative regard. Such ethico-aesthetic openness to transcendence is thus an imaginatively productive tension of expressive form and content; a process that participates and resonates in the unforeseeable flow of time, which is here regarded as the imaginatively apprehended medium of divine creativity. This is a far cry from the notional solution of all genuine difference in a merely conceptual synthesis, to which Kierkegaard rightly objects. We have found with Coleridge that aesthetic reflection expands towards infinity, no conceptual determination being adequate to the ethico-aesthetic experience. This expansion allows an object to function as a symbol, that is, allows a contemplated object of imaginative empathy to intimate more than itself-qua-phenomenon.

I have found reason to make a further, theological, claim in this chapter. To eyes such as Coleridge's, that is, through the eyes of Christian faith, an intimation of transcendence might justifiably be interpreted as a glimpse of the everyday world as created, an encounter with the familiar and calculable in its own 'ecstatic' otherness. Coleridge's intimated, aesthetic activity might allow the everyday world to appear in its own otherness, in its divinely ordained integrity, as opposed to what calculative, self-interested determinate knowledge can predict of it, always already or transcendently, in advance.

Over the last seven chapters, I have been constructing a theologically motivated, cumulative argument based on the need to find a theologically appropriate aesthetic capable of meeting Kierkegaardian criteria regarding the nature of paradoxical faith. Such is needed in order to provide a theoretical rationale for Kierkegaard's own aesthetic practice of indirect theological communication, as contradicted, inconsistently, by his theoretical limitations concerning the role of imagination in the life of faith. With the biblically inspired, symbolically mediated romanticism of Coleridge, I suggest that such an aesthetic of divine intimation has been discovered. By virtue of its meeting Bergsonian criteria regarding the qualitative incalculability of experiential process, Coleridge's rich and meditative aesthetic reflection may be regarded as open to a genuinely incalculable, and thus truly transcendent divine approach. Coleridge thus offers us an illuminating aesthetic framework within which Kierkegaard's imaginatively



communicated existential theology may be philosophically accommodated, and meaningfully contemplated.



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## **APPENDICES**

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Romantic Theology and the Structure of Faith**

#### **Introduction: Kierkegaard and Williams**

As an appendix to my thesis, I shall show how Charles Williams' imaginative and theologically motivated interpretation of Dante, in his *Figure of Beatrice*, enacts, manifests, and makes concrete just such an ethico-aesthetic inter-dependency of existential and romantic insights, as has been found to typify Coleridge's aesthetic reflection. I suggest that, in this work, Williams is offering us genuinely nourishing, theological fruit, through a critically astute and nuanced union of the perspectives of Kierkegaard and Coleridge.

I will be comparing the romantic theology of Charles Williams and the structure of Kierkegaardian faith. Critical attention to the roles of art and human love in Williams' thinking, and reflection on his distinction between false and true 'romanticisms' can, I believe, point towards the goal of this thesis, by suggesting a corrective for Kierkegaard's theoretical inability to find a place for the artistry and aesthetic activity which he himself relies on as central to his theological practice of indirect communication. Crucially for my overall argument in this thesis, I address Williams' poetic theology in light of my reading of Kierkegaard's evaluation of the importance of imaginative activity within the life of faith. This reading of Williams' aesthetic thought will enable me to challenge Kierkegaard's own refusal of any theological role for *artistic* imaginative activity. My main contention is that Kierkegaard fails to, but *needs* to make central to the life of faith the kind of artistry which he himself employs so skilfully as an indirect communicator of that faith. This is because such faith cannot be objectively mediated, and must constantly refuse the temptation of an objectifying or conceptually 'eternalising' 'infinite resignation'. In the Kantian aesthetic terms of an earlier chapter, Kierkegaardian paradoxical faith demands – as intrinsic to its own structural dynamics – a conceptually indeterminate imaginative activity.

Thus this appendix is directed towards a plausible correction to the perceived flaw in the structure Kierkegaardian thought: the basic incompatibility between Kierkegaard's practice of creatively indirect communication and his theoretical stance towards artistic imaginative activity, around which my explorations have been oriented over the foregoing chapters. Following on from these earlier findings, I suggest that in delineating the figure of his pseudonymous anonym, 'A', (who we met in relation to the musical aesthetics of *Either/Or*, in the first chapter), Kierkegaard has wrongly regarded as the norm of romantic aesthetics a



pseudo-romantic, misuse of aesthetic images for immediate and exclusive ego-gratification – a sentimental and immoral manipulation of experience, and other people. I argue that a basically Kantian account of the intrinsically moral shape of the aesthetic relation as ‘disinterested interest’ is more in line with the important tradition of romantic artistic thinking and practice with which Charles Williams identifies.

The kind of romantic artistry and aesthetic experience that Williams recognises and champions are in essence a creative, interpretive response: an ethical engagement of the will with, and for, otherness, rather than the anonymous, hedonistic aesthete’s wilful and egoistic manipulation of otherness. In suggesting this corrective, I will be building on Williams’ insights into the relation between poetic, purely stylistic considerations and the possibility of human receptivity to transcendence. In the process I will draw on findings from earlier chapters. What should emerge is a model of imaginative, artistic creativity and aesthetic experience that is in keeping with Kierkegaard’s own philosophical and theological approach.

### **(1) Kierkegaard and Williams: A Harmony of Insights**

To begin to address these issues, I find a point of entry in Kierkegaard’s critique of ‘Infinite Resignation’ in *Fear and Trembling*. We will need, first, to remind ourselves of the role of imaginative activity in the reception of revelation in Kierkegaard’s *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, as Ferreira reads it, in response to which I identified and focused the central issue of my thesis back in the first chapter.

As we saw in chapter two, an indirectly communicated and imaginatively mediated subjective relation to paradoxical truth is uncovered at the heart of the response to paradoxical revelation: Kierkegaard’s ‘religiousness B’. Kierkegaard describes the *effort* of ethical passion – an imaginatively sustained *tension* of activity and passivity – as the driving of a pair of horses as quickly as possible, one of which is a Pegasus, while the other is a worn out nag. The art of balancing Pegasus and the nag, steering a course with opposite tendencies, represents the relation of finitude and infinity, of eternity to time, that is inherent in the passion of paradoxical faith. As dependent upon infinite alterity, and therefore not a straightforwardly immanent choice, amenable to universal norms, the leap of faith is not a quantitatively discreet act. Rather it is a *qualitative transition*, the decision of faith being an abrupt and passively experienced ‘gestalt’ shift: a ‘cision’ in consciousness that manifests the dawning of a changed world-orientation, or transformed subjective perspective.

The will can *want* to see reality in the light of faith, to respond to an infinite personal address, but it is not directly capable of the transition. From the purely human side of conversion, the new mode of ‘seeing’ will be something passive, something that just does or does not happen to one, as when interpreting ambiguous puzzle-pictures. In a situation in which a ‘Wittgensteinian’ gestalt shift can occur, initially we can see only one possibility (for example, two facial profiles in silhouette); at some point, after concentrated attention, and perhaps coaxing and guidance – the kind of indirect assistance that Kierkegaard offers through his indirect authorship – another alternative (a chalice between the silhouettes) comes into focus. Through metaphorical transformation, as Douglas Berggren suggests, a *decisive* threshold is crossed due to such a re-contextualisation of *gestalt*, transformed meaning emerging in ‘a creative, imaginatively sustained interaction between diverse perspectives which cannot be literalised or disentangled without destroying the kind of insight, truth or reality which the metaphor provides’. There is no univocally communicable way of telling that the quality of faith motivates the actions of a person in such an objectively unmediated relationship to God.

Such a person is described as a ‘knight of faith’ in *Fear and Trembling*. Here, Abraham finds himself in the situation of having continuously to refuse the possibility of objective intelligibility, or direct communicability, as a surrogate for faith. ‘Infinite resignation’ denotes a temptation: it is a refusal of paradoxical transcendence, as the last possible means by which Abraham could make his action intelligible to his social peers. When faced with the demand to sacrifice his son, Abraham is constantly tempted protect himself socially and emotionally, by *idealising* his relationship to Isaac, and thereby to accept the surrender of his love as a real relationship of ethical concern in risk and commitment. But to idealise a love relationship is to forego or resign love as an actuality, to infinitise the reality of the loved one as an unattainable ideal to which one devotes oneself in thought. By means of such an idealisation, one transfers one’s interest to a mere concept of the loved one, whose eternalised status is merely the eternal un-changeability of a thought-object. Such infinite resignation of reality is thus the last possible way through which one can buy into the illusion of an achieved and communicable understanding of one’s existence, through the failure to recognise the intrinsic indefiniteness of subjective human becoming. To resist this temptation to objectify oneself in relation to God, to make oneself intelligible in terms of prevailing secular norms, is to render oneself open to transcendence, to become truly open to unclassifiable, or un-pre-thinkable interpretive possibilities in relation to an infinitely transcendent divine approach, *on the strength of the ‘absurd’*, as it would appear from the perspective of the objective understanding.

The apparent absurdity of revelation will not cease to be paradoxical when faith has been embraced. Faith does not become something assimilable to the life-view prevailing before

revelation, described in *Fear and Trembling* as the ethical ‘universal’. Rather faith transforms one’s relation to one’s world. The understanding’s judgement on the absurdity will still stand, meaning that the understanding, through imaginative activity, will be simultaneously affirmed and suspended, judging and desisting. As in Berggren’s account of metaphor, the understanding *will be both active and passive in imaginative tension, or suspension*. Customary and universally intelligible judgemental tendencies are present as suspended. In *Fear and Trembling*, in the context of a teleological suspension of a universally communicable norm for ethics, I suggest that this imaginative suspension of the understanding takes the form of a persistently repeated refusal of the universal intelligibility of an idealistic ‘infinite resignation’: a refusal of what Kierkegaard regards as typical of an objective, conceptually ‘eternalising’ approach, and which he identifies as ‘religiousness A’, in opposition to the paradoxical Christian faith which is identified in the *Postscript* as ‘religiousness B’.

The existentialist or Kierkegaardian resonances in Charles Williams’ aesthetic thinking can be discerned in *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*.<sup>813</sup> This similarity emerges, for example, in Williams’ recognition that finite verse patterns need interpretation, and that such aesthetic interpretation is a basically moral activity, since interpretive acts necessarily involve judgemental decision.

Like many thinkers after Kant, Williams suggests that all human experience is formally patterned,<sup>814</sup> or constructed. A poem is a pattern, and is thus homologous or analogous to experience. Poetry is truer to human nature than prose because it acknowledges its own finitude. Human experience is always from a limited perspective: an awareness mediated by limited formal patterning, or formal construction.

Poetry, by virtue of recognising this limitation, in fact transcends it to offer insight into the nature of experience as a whole. Poetry can encapsulate insights into the shape of existential possibilities, as possibilities for becoming. According to Dunning, this means that poetry provides insight into the shape of existence, by enabling a leap out of existence: a leap out of time by virtue of the poetic overview of a pattern of becoming as a whole. The potential pattern for becoming is therefore itself a-temporal, or ideal – the ideality of existence, a translation of existence into ideality – not the actual temporality of existence.<sup>815</sup> It is this aspect of Steven M. Dunning’s reading which needs qualification and clarification, as I shall suggest as we progress.

<sup>813</sup> Charles Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. 8-9.

<sup>814</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, pp. vi, 1-10.

<sup>815</sup> Stephen M. Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2000), p. 145.

An existential pattern of possibility can thus be discerned through a poetic patterning, homologous to existential possibility, due to what Williams regards as an immanent, or incarnate Logos structure of reality. One can thus see the significance of temporal process through its poetic representation. Without actually having to pass through that process, one becomes aware of it as a possibility for personal becoming. One is able to view the completed shape of an event, its pattern, its place in an overall pattern of experience. One sees a whole, enabling an insightful purchase on action. On the basis of this poetic map one can move more effectively to realise a given possibility. The opaqueness of temporal actuality, which is always a partial view of process from within process, becomes transparent in a poetic epiphany of the nature of process. According to Dunning's reading, the poem *Mount Badon*<sup>816</sup> vividly identifies this structuring power of poetry with the incarnate logos, since the organic wholeness that is the human body is an 'index', or microcosm encapsulating and pointing out the logos structure of the universe.<sup>817</sup> The poem itself encapsulates the shape of experience, and is thus, in a sense, an index to the index, pointing out the nature of existential possibilities. Williams borrows the image of the body as an 'index' from Wordsworth's *Prelude*,<sup>818</sup> and on the basis of this imagery he builds his notion of an indexical relationship between an imagined poetic world and actual existence.<sup>819</sup>

An example of Williams' theory at work in his poetic practice may help illustrate my meaning. In Williams' poem, *Mount Badon*, (from *Taliessin through Logres*, the first of two series of poems making up the *Arthuriad*), the *meaningful* rhythm of the Logos, incarnate in temporal process, is effectively mediated to the Christian bard, Taliessin, guiding his action through his imaginative engagement with the metrical and semantic patterns of Virgil's *Aeneid*. A poetically mediated communication thus *indirectly* enables him to act, to know when the critical moment arrives, and how to seize it, thus empowering his navigation of time, *imaginatively schematising* the situation unrolling before him:

Staring, motionless, he sat.  
 Dimly behind him he heard how his staff stirred.  
 One said: "He dreams or makes verse"; one: "Fool,  
 all lies in a passion of patience – my lord's rule".  
 In a passion of patience he waited the expected second.  
 Suddenly the noise abated, the fight vanished, the last  
 few belated shouts died in a new quiet.

<sup>816</sup> Charles Williams, 'Taliessin through Logres', in David Llewellyn Dodds (ed.), *Arthurian Poets: Charles Williams*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 33-34.

<sup>817</sup> Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, p. 146.

<sup>818</sup> William Wordsworth, 'The Prelude', in *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, pp. 279-281.

<sup>819</sup> See 'The Index of the Body', in Charles Williams, *The Image of the City*, (Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2007), pp. 80-87; see also Charles Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, (Berkeley: Apocryphile Press, 2005) p. 64.

In the silence of a distance, clear to the king's poet's sight,  
 Virgil was standing on a trellised path by the sea,  
 Taliessin saw him negligently leaning; he felt  
 the deep breath dragging the depth of all dimension,  
 as the Roman sought for the word (...)

Civilised centuries away, the Roman moved.  
 Taliessin saw the flash of his style  
 Dash at the wax; he saw the hexameter spring  
 and the King's sword swing: he saw, in the long field,  
 the point where the pirate chaos might suddenly yield,  
 the place for the law of grace to strike....<sup>820</sup>

As C. S. Lewis writes in his commentary on the *Arthuriad*,<sup>821</sup> Virgil's verse pattern is an achievement of order, just as is a decisive, well executed cavalry charge. Taliessin's recollection of poetically just ordering informs his vision of a field of ambiguous strife, the Arthurian battle of *Mons Badonicus* functioning as a poetic image for our existential predicament.

Since our knowledge is always epistemologically constructed or patterned (as we learned from Kant in an earlier chapter), Williams is suggesting that our knowing is most fully self-aware and realised, most fully comes into its own, in the deliberately constructed ostentation of verse patterns.<sup>822</sup> Verse thus displays the nature of human experience better than prose, for Williams. But, as only a finite patterning, any verse is necessarily ambiguous in relation to the infinite whole, the Logos structure, which it can, nevertheless, mediate, and this ambiguity in poetry's power to illumine existential possibilities thus calls for decisive commitment in the interpretive realisation of such possibilities.<sup>823</sup>

According to Williams, such interpretive ambiguity pertains because of the Fall, envisaged as an epistemological failing rather than an ontological failing.<sup>824</sup> Because one can choose good or evil, one's knowledge of the good becomes distorted: rather than being integrated with the good, one knows it from outside, or obliquely, as a source of self-division: according to an estranged perspective. Thus Williams holds that corporality is *not* fallen; only our knowledge is. Therefore the embodiment of verse, its imaginative patterning of elements of articulated sound,

<sup>820</sup> Williams, *Arthurian Poets*: Charles Williams, pp. 33-34.

<sup>821</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Arthurian Torso*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), p. 111.

<sup>822</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, p. 5.

<sup>823</sup> Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, p. 151.

<sup>824</sup> Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, p. 152; Williams, 'The Vision of the Empire', in *Arthurian Poets*: Charles Williams, pp. 25-30; C. S. Lewis, *Arthurian Torso*, pp. 109-110; Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 64.

as a physical patterning homologous with our bodies, can at least intimate un-fallen truth, so enabling some insight into the incarnate (embodied) Logos structure of reality. Poetry thus *happens* to the reader, as well as demanding his attentive effort in interpretation: an effort of embodied will and imaginative patterning, primarily, rather than a matter for speculation and theoretical reason. The poetic meaning is not at the disposal of the mind, either of the author or the reader, but ‘flows up’, ‘felt in the blood and felt along the heart’, (an image of Wordsworth’s utilised by Williams).<sup>825</sup>

Thus it can be argued that Williams’ aesthetic thinking harmonises with an interpretation of the ethical role of imagination in the appropriation of paradoxical revelation, in Kierkegaard’s thinking, as discussed above. It is on this premiss that I build the rest of this chapter.

## **(2) Williams, Kierkegaard & Dunning: Anamnesis or Imaginative Indirection?**

According to Stephen M. Dunning’s reading of Kierkegaardian thought, however, and which I turn to now, there is no room at all for imaginative activity at the level of the appropriation of paradoxical faith, just as there is no room for specifically artistic aesthetic activity at this level. In fact it would be fair to say, in light of the reading of Kierkegaard’s position that I set out earlier in this chapter, (and more fully in chapter one), that Dunning does not at all distinguish between imaginative interpretation in response to revelation, and the role of imaginative interpretation in the creation and appreciation of art.

Central to the analysis of the role of imagination in the life of faith that I have been following is the understanding that imagination is essentially a medium sustaining a tension between opposite tendencies, such as receptivity and activity. From the purely human perspective, as we saw in chapter one, revelation is mediated by an attentive *effort* of imaginatively interpretive receptivity. The act of will in the Kierkegaardian ‘leap of faith’ is an effort of receptivity, stretching immanent imaginative resources to interpret, falteringly, what could never have been imagined by those resources alone.

In light of this understanding of imagination, in what follows, I aim to deepen my reading of Williams’ ethically motivated aesthetics, by showing how his thought resists Dunning’s criticism, not least because Dunning bases his argument on what I believe to be an inadequate reading of Kierkegaardian thought, especially in relation to the ethical role of Kierkegaardian imagination.

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<sup>825</sup> William Wordsworth, ‘Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey’, in *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, pp. 241-244.

In *The Crisis and the Quest*, Dunning focuses his critique of Williams' poetic theology through a reading of the dynamics of Kierkegaard's analysis of the human condition in terms of three stages of existence, or existential spheres, (an analysis which we encountered in the first chapter). Dunning puts forward a fascinating reading of the implicit aesthetic theory, or poetics, which is set to work by Williams in his major poetic cycle, *The Arthuriad*. The questions motivating Dunning's theoretical analysis concern the structural coherence of Williams' poetics: does a perceived incoherence in William's aesthetic theory lead to a breakdown of significance in his aesthetic practice? Is, as Dunning suggests, Williams in the grip of an existential crisis? Is a religiously motivated existential double-mindedness, on William's part, causing a breakdown of meaningfulness at the level of aesthetic theory, to the detriment of his creativity, at the level of poetic practice? Dunning characterises William's existential bind as an indecisive hovering between 'religiousness A' and 'religiousness B', leading him to become, and, perhaps, to recognise that he has become, what Kierkegaard describes as merely a 'poet of existence': one who avoids decision by objectifying, or poeticising a genuine insight into an extremely painful existential crisis, so as not to have to face what he dreads: actually doing something about it. Dunning regards Williams as at the edge of his immanent aesthetic resources: realising that his own abilities are inadequate to save him, Williams is poeticising his 'despair', according to the Kierkegaardian scheme.

In view of Ferreira's findings concerning the crucial role of imagination *within* the conversion to paradoxical revelation, and in the process of the appropriation of that revelation through the life of faith – as a 'knight of faith' – I suggest that Dunning could be misreading William's theologically motivated aesthetics to the detriment of his assessment of the significance of William's poetry. The problem, according to Dunning, is that poetry is said by Williams to be able to mediate saving revelation, yet also, and in *apparent* contradiction to William's recognition of the impossibility of any schemes of self-salvation, poetry is regarded as an activity falling completely within immanent human capabilities. I suggest, however, that Williams recognises that the poet's imagination can be actively *receptive* to un-pre-thinkable otherness in composition, when that poet is someone realising the impossibility of self-salvation, and who is therefore imaginatively active in the receptive appropriation of paradoxical revelation. Qualifying Dunning's assessment in light of my understanding of imagination as set forth above, I suggest that Williams sees the patterning of poetic style, (as exemplified in the quotation from *Mount Badon*, which I gave above), as the medium of manifestation of the eternal logos pattern, incarnate in the universe, *and thus woven into, and inextricable from time*.

It follows that any poetic insight into the world as a divine Creation cannot be extricated from an awareness of the reality of loss and suffering that all process involves. Refusing to ‘eternalise’, to flee into the immanent closure and safety of an idealistic ‘infinite resignation’, the poet perceives, and invites his audience to participate his vision of the patterning of eternal meaning in and as the course of time: the two levels cannot be separated out in any teleologically secured insight into trans-temporal fulfilment. Thus it is not a question of an ideal pattern coming to poetic manifestation in separation from a current event, but rather that poetry enables a current experience to be seen in the temporal ‘shape’ of an opportunity: one could say, I suggest – and taking Kant’s thinking on the imagination as my frame of reference – that the interpretive opportunity opened up by verse at a given time *schematises* that given situation, allowing a problem to appear as an opportunity. But this does not come about by reading the poem as if it were an a-temporal map of time, (as Dunning suggests), as if the poem were an ideal archetype of temporal pattern, discreet in itself; rather an insight comes about by envisaging the current situation, as viewed *through* the poetry, as an opportunity. The poetry becomes relevant on the basis of the situation, yet at the same time, the situation only signifies as an opportunity on the basis of the poetic interpretation. Neither aspect can claim temporal *or even logical* precedence over the other, and yet the difference between the two – as a creative difference – is not fused into indifference or identity: rather the imagination sustains a productive tension between both poles –poetic ‘ideality’ and temporal reality – allowing each to illumine the other, or as we have seen that Coleridge would put it, to transform one another through a permeation or ‘translucence’ of the general in the particular, and vice versa.

Here we must remember Kant’s crucial analysis of the nature and activity of productive imagination, as discussed earlier. For Kant, it will be recalled, imagination is a component of the mind’s constructive spontaneity, since all synthesis of the manifold of sense belongs to the imagination. And yet as a mode of intuition, imagination is intrinsically bound up with a sensible receptivity, which it can only synthesise on the basis of the conceptual, categorical forms to which its schematising activity is subservient. But again, such categorically structuring conceptual features could be said to depend on this same imaginative schematic activity, as a mode of hypotyposis, or presentation of concepts, on the basis of which concepts are introduced to sensible representations. On the one hand, transcendental imagination structures sensible apprehension, and does so in accordance with conceptual categories, which give experience its objectivity. On the other hand, and equally, the schematism according to which sensible apprehension is structured is an imaginatively apprehending activity, on the basis of which, alone, are categories able to be brought to bear on sensible representations at all.



Thus, for Kant, the factor which enables categorically structured time, as the interpretive form of inner sense, is the same transcendental imagination whose structuring activity in relation to the form of inner sense is enabled by the pure understanding. The transcendental imagination is thus both guide and guided: grounding the possibility of experience and grounded by the shape of possible experience as a whole. Again, we see that no temporally or logically un-ambivalent solution can be accorded to the possibility of human experience. Truthfulness in aesthetic interpretation, through artistic creativity, thus demands the eschewal of any objectively secured account of human existence – any idealistic, or as we shall see below, any sinuous, hedonistic attempt to falsify the intrinsically uncertain nature of the human condition, as essentially unfinished. Human beings can have no ultimate grasp of their own becoming. Such an account of, or relation to experience would amount to a premature claim for teleological fulfilment or self-salvific achievement. The illusion of teleological certainty of ‘Religiousness A’, as Kierkegaard saw, as equally the hedonistic aestheticism of the first part of *Either/Or*, as we shall see, are wish-fulfilling strategies that falsify experience. Such strategies are in fact flights from reality.

In applying these Kantian findings to William’s thought, I suggest that imaginative productivity manifests a tension between structuring framework – this would be the poetic temporal schema – and the actual situation which invites interpretation in terms of the poetic temporality. So resuming our discussion of Williams’ theological aesthetics, I suggest that a poem can become significant *as* a source of opportunity on the basis of an actual life-context, while this same context is only viewable as a relevant opportunity on the basis of its poetic schematisation. Thus the ideal element – the poem – does not give a-temporal knowledge of temporal, or embodied Logos structure, rather such structure is made manifest through the ‘Coleridgean’ mutual permeation of the ideal and the real: the poetry and the reality.

Granting, with Dunning, that it is fruitful and appropriate to read Williams’ thought through the template of Kierkegaardian existential thinking, then I believe this Kantian-imaginative model does far more justice to Williams, as also informing a more nuanced view of imaginative process as central to Kierkegaard’s conception of human existence. Recalling chapter one, we saw that Kierkegaard understands ethical self-realisation in general, and not just the appropriation of paradoxical faith, as not simply the following of objective ethical commands, but rather as involving the imaginative re-envisioning of life situations in new ways, as ‘infinite’ thought-contents come to be seen as possibilities for actual becoming. It was seen in chapter two that the on-going, temporal movement of choosing oneself ethically is not a decision to do something, but an ‘indirect’ decision, and thus in the terms of Ferreira’s discussion of Kierkegaardian will, an act of interpretive effort, requiring imaginative mediation.

Through the choice to interpret imaginatively one is enabled to behave in accord with a given self-image. But this self-image or possibility is not regarded by Kierkegaard as if affording a discreet ‘picture’ to which one might unambiguously refer in order to take one’s ethical bearings. Rather, through imaginative activity, one becomes translucent to an emerging ethical possibility. Kierkegaard, like Coleridge, speaks in terms of concrete life becoming ‘*permeated with consciousness*’ (my italics): the ideal and the real are held in a productive tension, rather than dissolved in an idealistic synthesis of opposites, solely within the objectivity of thought.

But Dunning does not think in terms of the Kierkegaardian imagination as mediating an interpretive and actually productive tension of real and ideal opposites in existence. According to Dunning, Williams tends to forget that on the basis of his own theoretical limitation of the role of poetry, his distinguishing it from the actual existence which it can represent, poetic translations of a painful growth process can only achieve ideality, or aesthetic objectivity (religiousness A), and that such poetic insights must therefore leap over *actual* processive engagement and suffering.<sup>826</sup> However, I believe that attention to Williams own words in this regard, as set out in the preface to *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, might suggest a different interpretation, more in line with the Kierkegaardian position which I set out at the beginning of the chapter, and which I will now build on. Williams writes,

The relation between poetic experience and actual experience, which has divided some critics, has been no more than touched on. That relation is of high importance, yet it is obscure. We must not make poetry serve our morals, yet we must not consider it independent of our morals. It is not a spiritual guide, yet it possesses a *reality which continually persuades us to repose upon it even in practical things of everyday* (my italics).<sup>827</sup>

‘We have only to enjoy it’, Williams says next, but radically qualifies, and deepens, what any genuine joy derived from poetic insight would mean: ‘but only in proportion as we enjoy it with our whole being’ – that is, as appropriating, by embodying in our lives, the reality communicated by the verse – ‘can it be said of it that no man shall take its joy from us’. Thus Williams affirms an existentially illuminating role for poetry, while denying that it can serve as a spiritual guide or road map. The nature of poetic illumination will not be directly and straightforwardly translatable into any objective, didactic formula.

It should be remembered that at the beginning of this chapter, as in chapter one, we saw that Kierkegaard regards subjective truth as a refusal of the temptation of objective certainty. Objective truth distorts the reality of existence, which is a matter of on-going and unfinishable

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<sup>826</sup> Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, p. 147

<sup>827</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, p. vi.

interpretation. As *'Inter-Esse'*, the structure of subjectivity is poised always between ideality and reality: by interpreting reality linguistically, we are always already converting it into ideality. But such a translation or conversion is not any translation into the 'Hegelian' ideality of pure thought, since, in the Kierkegaardian analysis of existence (in *Johannes Climacus*, for example), it becomes clear that thought is aware that it is based upon or grounded in what Kierkegaard describe as 'sensuous immediacy', (in *'Either/Or'*). Similarly, in *Reason and Beauty*, Williams contrasts verse from prose on the basis that prose is always tempted to forget the limited nature of all human patterning, tempted towards the illusion of an unsituated, God's-eye 'view from nowhere'. In verse,

So long as this rhythmical form divides itself into lines and prints itself so (presumably because of some inner necessity of its nature), so long it makes ostentation a part of its very existence in a way in which prose does not. Prose pretends and tends to subdue its own method of existence to its business of dealing with its reader (...) Prose, especially sweet and rational prose, conceals its human limitations. It may argue or instruct or exhort, but all that while it subdues or hides from us the pattern which is our reminder that its conclusions are what they are because of its own limitations – which are the writer's – which are in the nature of man. Man cannot know things by any means but through his own nature, and it is that nature in its thousand different capacities, but still only man's, which the pattern of poetry makes ostentatious to us.<sup>828</sup>

The prose through which our everyday engagements and interactions is mediated, and through which learned authors seek to give transparent clarity to questions concerning the 'meaning of life', can lead us to forget the perspectival, tentative nature of such linguistic mediation. Against such a tendency, Williams' characterisation of the 'ostentation' of verse points up the uncertain and interpretively constructed nature of real experience. The familiarity which our habituation to prose engenders tends to make one feel that one has some unquestionable purchase on reality, and therefore Williams insistence on a distinction between a world conjured within the strict patterning of verse, as distinct from our everyday life-world, is designed to block any escapist attempt through artistic creativity to foster an illusion of a-temporal certainty. Verse self-consciously constructs its imagined world, while existence is for the most part unaware of epistemological construction, and thus tends to be lulled into illusory certainties. Verse wakes us up, making us aware of constructive patterning, and is thus true to the nature of real experience, and simultaneously distant from any false and self comforting objectifications of existential uncertainty.

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<sup>828</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, pp. 7-8.

It seems to me, therefore, that William's separation of actual life experience from poetic experience, (to which Dunning draws attention in objecting that Williams surreptitiously elides the distinction between existence and its poetic expression), is in fact oriented to the avoidance of an illusory certainty, belying our historically situated, essentially hermeneutical condition, through objective dogmatic didacticism.

Williams' existential/poetic distinction thus agrees with Kierkegaard's objection to any attempt at a univocally direct or objectively mediated relation to religious truth. In a religious context, any didactic attempt to 'mine' poetry for univocally communicable theological 'truths' would constitute an objectification of Christian faith, and as such would remain within the aesthetic sphere of existence, as Kierkegaard understands the term, since there would be no 'reduplication', or personal appropriation of the content of faith through what Kierkegaard describes as 'second immediacy': a reinstating of one's life-world on the transformed basis of a receptive activity of imagination, as one re-interprets one's world in relation to a paradoxical revelation that resists objective, conceptual mediation. It is through such imaginatively interpretive reduplication that the aesthetic aspect of human being finds a place in genuine faith. In the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, this criticism of an objectifying relation to truth is levelled against both the formulaic lip-service of nominal ecclesiastical Christianity, and the zealotry of enthusiasts and pseudo-evangelical revivalists. True transcendence, as Kierkegaard sees it, lies beyond any objectively univocal account of the sacred.

But here we come to the heart of the problem, as Dunning sees it. According to Dunning, this bodily availability of embodied meaning means that there is an *immanent continuity* of aesthetic revelation and our receptivity to it, as opposed to a paradoxical breach of immanence. For Dunning,<sup>829</sup> this signifies that we are still in 'religiousness A', according to the Kierkegaardian paradigm, despite the existential turn which Williams has striven to give to poetic experience, through his envisaging of a responsibility of aesthetic interpretive acts.

William's embodied logos is, in effect, regarded by Dunning as an eternal substrate which individuals always already participate, which they can always already tap into. Thus I would suggest that Dunning sees Williams' theological scheme as a sort of Platonic reflex, or Platonism in reverse: the fallen or damaged *noetic* perspective is counteracted *anamnetically* by an already healthy *embodied* insight, as mediated through the physical patterns of poetry.

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<sup>829</sup> Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, p. 164-174.

Thus, for Dunning, a kind of inverted Platonism<sup>830</sup> in William's theological aesthetic leads to the same false, immanent securing of existential identity that we saw Kierkegaard attacking, earlier on, in the form of its own mirror image in *Fear and Trembling*, as a self-securing, *conceptually a-temporal* certainty.

But I would maintain, on the contrary, that a tensional model of imaginative activity as an attentive effort of interpretive receptivity, such as we have been following to interpret the dynamics of faith in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, could offer a more adequate insight into William's aesthetic theory, and thus into his poetic theology, because such an account is more alive to the subtleties of Kierkegaard's account of imagination as a sustaining of interpretive tension between opposite tendencies and possibilities. To the extent that a human interpretive activity in response to revelation is neither purely active nor passive, it can be reasonably suggested that it is not a flat contradiction for Williams to regard human imaginative activity, whether in aesthetic composition or appreciation, as primarily a dis-possessive openness of interpretive response: an active passivity, or as Williams defines it in *Mount Badon* (above), a '*passion of patience*' (my italics).

In *The Figure of Beatrice*, as we shall see, Williams distinguishes between true and false romanticisms, along similar lines to our discussion in chapters six and seven with reference to an aesthetic dialectic of presence and absence. For Williams, true romantic or expressive creativity is always, and primarily, a response to genuine otherness. As explicitly opposed to the pseudo-romantic sentimentality of an egoistic and hedonistic manipulation of experience, such as is represented by the aesthetic anonym of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, the *Figure of Beatrice* is a Dantean theology of romantic love, in which true romantic experience is regarded as a turning towards a fuller and truer revelation of reality: an aesthetically mediated communication that orients one towards the appropriation of ever more abundant life. Williams sets this true romanticism in stark contrast to a self-serving manipulation of the revealed beauty of the Logos in creation, which he diagnoses as a desire to make the image serve the interpreter, rather than *vice versa*, in a refusal of saving conversion. Williams' contention in *The Figure of Beatrice* is that, in attempting to falsify reality by acting as if the created ego were the uncreated centre, the pseudo-romantic aesthete affirms non-being, inverting the Logos structure, and that such, ultimately, is the road to Dante's *Inferno*.

However, in order fully to vindicate Williams from the charge of a muddled and unintentional advocacy of self-salvation through poetic activity, some important intermediate steps of

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<sup>830</sup> Such anamnesis is actually seen as arising from a differentiated identity of polar opposites, such as we have met with in reference to post-Kantian *Naturphilosophie*: a position which is characterised by Dunning as basically Heraclitean; see Dunning, *The Crisis and the Quest*, pp.168-169.

argument are still lacking. Against Dunning, we have been analysing William's verse as *itself* a hermeneutically faithful aesthetic response, and as such, sharing the same basic structure as a Kierkegaardian model of imaginative activity at work in the appropriation of revelation in the life of faith. But we will need to look more closely at the problematic nature of Kierkegaard's own attitude to purely artistic aesthetic activity. As Kierkegaard's position stands, Dunning would appear to be right that there can be no role for human artistry in the mediation of revelation, no aesthetic mediation of the decision between Religiousness 'A' and Religiousness 'B'.

The problem with this, as I have been suggesting from the beginning of this thesis, is that Kierkegaard's position in fact *cannot* stand without finding a role for poetic or artistic activity in the mediation of revelation. As the intrinsic importance of his own strategy of indirect communication to any genuine faith relation makes clear, Kierkegaard's account of the existential spheres, in so far as it banishes art from faith is structurally flawed. But more importantly, perhaps, it is also theologically flawed. For Kierkegaard, aesthetic activity can be redeemed only *within* the subject's imaginative relation to revealed truth. Thus Kierkegaard will not allow that purely artistic, aesthetic activity can be a means at least of intimating the true freedom that is of course only fully revealed in Christ. And yet if the flesh is still not redeemed, if, simply *as* flesh, as the sensuous immediacy of living, created drives and even, by extension, cosmic energies, it remains in an external relation to the Law, then Kierkegaard's paradox is not as radical as he suggests. In this case, the trans-subjective actuality of the paradoxical revelation – which need not imply a reified objectivity – is again restricted to subjective ideality, albeit in terms of an 'existential' experience that is more holistically conceived than Hegelian dialectical thought.

I propose to show that for Williams, as for Kierkegaard, the ethical quality of existence is dependent on a free, personal decision. However, as seen, Kierkegaard regards all 'external' aesthetic interests as sub-serving egotistical hedonism. This means that, for Kierkegaard, all aesthetic appreciation of nature or art is simply seen as distracting the self away from the task of cultivating its own subjective freedom. Consequently decision will be a choice to move from the aesthetic into the ethical sphere of existence, for Kierkegaard.<sup>831</sup>

As against this approach, in the *Figure of Beatrice*, Williams suggests the possibility that an ethical path may open up within the sphere of the aesthetic itself, which through the repeatedly demanded renewed of a decision to subordinate immediate sensible gratification to the

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<sup>831</sup> As is made manifest in his writings under a variety of pseudonyms; I will be focusing on the pseudonymous anonym 'A' ('the aesthete') in *Either/Or*, as 'edited' by 'Victor Emerita', and the 'Johannes Climacus' of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.

appreciation and appropriation of a sensibly embodied presentiment of religious truth, can lead to real personal growth. Such is the path of salvation pursued by Dante, in response to, and led onward by the figure of Beatrice, in the *Divine Comedy*. The poem starts with Dante hesitating and disoriented in a wood, symbolising a moment of crisis that offers the possibility of the renewal of a course of poetic discipleship that has been lost sight of in the course of his life, and also reveals to him the inevitable price of its refusal in the *Inferno*.

### **(3) Kierkegaard, Williams & Dante: The Aesthetic as Ethical**

As was discovered earlier in the chapter, ethical decision, according to Kierkegaard, must be continually re-affirmed and re-appropriated through life. I will try to show that such is indeed Williams's view of the matter also, but with the crucial difference that, for Williams, ethical faithfulness can flourish in response to natural or artistic beauty. For Kierkegaard, on the other hand, such beauty can only really function as a snare, a distraction from ethical decision, rather than acting as a creative focus for personal growth towards the true, divine centre, and away from egocentricity, as Williams suggests. I propose, first, to demonstrate the primacy of the existential category of decision for both Kierkegaard and Williams, before examining the divergence of their paths. I will start by recurring to aspects of chapter one, in order to deepen my findings concerning aesthetic subjectivity by relating Kierkegaard's account to Williams' understanding of aesthetic existence in *The Figure of Beatrice*.

As we saw in the first chapter, for Kierkegaard, Don Giovanni represents the nature of all pre-verbal desire, or sensuous immediacy. 'He' is thus not really an individual, but a sort of non-verbal, purely musically mediated 'universal': a pre-linguistic universal, a musical self-revelation, music itself being understood as a deficient language, since without words it is unable to ascend to the level of ethical reflection. Don Giovanni is a symbol also of the Protean vitality of music, since this mirrors the nature of sheer physical desire: like ocean waves, musical forms or objects of desire rise and dissolve, surge and diminish only so that they can surge again with increased power. Such also is the aspiration of the aesthetic anonym for his own existence: he seeks endless variation for which thematic materials or contents - and even other people are made use of in this way - serve merely as opportunities for self-gratification. Aesthetic contents must divert, must be interesting, but are not regarded as intrinsically valuable in any way. They are related to solely in so far as they can temporarily assuage the insatiable hunger of a hedonistic egotism. To escape from boredom becomes the sole motivation for the aesthete, as we have seen.

Thus, as well as symbolising Kierkegaard's understanding of music, Don Giovanni could also be seen as a symbol for the anonymous 'author' himself: the aesthete 'A'. In *Either/Or*, the aesthete's life-style emerges as one that seeks orientation solely from without, or which is in endless pursuit of external determination. In the pursuit of the outwardly diverting or interesting, and in the avoidance of boredom, particular pass-times are sought. Time, the unavoidable experience of process, is regarded by the aesthetically conditioned individual as the great enemy, as in the vividly claustrophobic experience of a nightmare when the desire for flight is unquenchable, in spite of the certainty of the futility of escape. Diversions are discovered by the self in flight from himself, but ego-centred enjoyment always palls, as itself a temporal, and thus passing phenomenon. The ego, however, impossibly wants to be an unchanging centre: it wants to be eternally blissful, to usurp the place of God. However the only opportunity of human consistency is temporal, is through the self-determination or decision for self limitation that is the carrying into effect of a course of action, and this is the very self-limiting decision from which aesthetic existence flees. By wanting to be everywhere, the concupiscent, aesthetic self is *lastingly* or enduringly nowhere, and is thus intrinsically empty. By wanting the stability of a thing, an objective entity, the aesthetic will renders itself powerless, as *self*-determination, or existence, and not entity, is the nature of the human subjective process.<sup>832</sup>

Buffeted from one eventual dissatisfaction to another, the necessarily disappointed aesthete wants to remain undetermined, to relate imaginatively to every momentarily interesting possibility, but to choose to embody none consistently. The aesthete is thus in a condition of despair, because he is a subject who does not want the temporally delimited conditions of subjectivity, which are however it's only possibility for growth towards fulfilment. Human wholeness in this life is a directional project. To be a subject is to decide upon a course, and to pursue it over time. The aesthete in the first part of *Either/Or* is fighting against his own finite conditions as an existing subject who does not want to limit himself, unwilling to recognise that only through such inward conditioning can he become himself, through a processive commitment to self-realisation.<sup>833</sup>

The aesthete, 'A', is truly anonymous or without identity, in a deeper sense than the authorial; or better, Kierkegaard, through this character, is exploring the sense in which all our lives are authorial constructions for which we bear the responsibility. It is true to character (or lack of it) that the anonym 'A' seeks to avoid identification with his own literary efforts: Kierkegaard, through this character, is attacking the early romanticism of Friedrich von Schlegel, in his

<sup>832</sup> See, for example, Kierkegaard's *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (*passim*).

<sup>833</sup> See, for example, Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death* (*passim*).



Fichtian phase,<sup>834</sup> before the influence of Schleiermacher and Schelling on his thinking. Through romantic-ironic self-consciousness, Schlegelian-Fichtian subjectivity is wilfully self-distanced from any creative self-expression, as in itself an all determining and intrinsically undetermined, eternalised ego. Kierkegaard paints for us the disturbing picture of the existential, or ethical consequences of acting upon such an impossibility, a refusal of existence's own finite, temporal conditions by an existing person leading ineluctably to an *impasse* of self-negating futility.

The Schlegelian-Fichtean romantic impossibly wants to *be* without the effort of becoming; always seeking to avoid the choice of whom he is to become: who he is to try to be. Kierkegaard's aesthetic anonym, in pursuit of romantic irony, and thus in flight from commitment, seeks to escape the unease of his self-contradictory predicament through thinking. Romantic irony is enthralled by the nature of self-consciousness, as theoretically reconstructed by Fichte as a self-subject which can never itself become an object, a power to be intuited, a reconstruction of the self derived from the Kantian epistemological condition of transcendental subjectivity. But Fichte's transcendental idealism converts this epistemological norm into an ontological absolute. As absolutely self-positing, or absolved from all relative conditions and effects, this transcendental ego exists solely in and as thought. In accord with this theory of self-consciousness, Kierkegaard's Schlegelian anonym seeks to theorise himself out of all relational ties.

But subjectivity is essentially relational, and comes to fruition through the responsibility of activity within a shared, public sphere of engagement, through the taking upon oneself of commitments and through a willingness to respond to the demands of others. Thought, as only potentiality for existence, is thus the only element within which the Schlegelian aesthete can approach himself, in flight from the painful self-contradiction that is his own failure to realise himself. Consequently, this idealising theorist of the self relates to himself through objective categories: he would objectify himself as an aesthetic object in his flight from the boredom of wasted time that is his own, inner, wasting away. He seeks, through thought, to absent himself from his own inwardness: in despair he despises himself, as an existence refusing to exist, vainly protesting against the conditions for self-realisation.

The hedonistic egotist that Kierkegaard shows us is too intelligent not to recognise, while seeking to evade the recognition, that such a lack of innerness, such a futile existence is desperately claustrophobic: there can be no subjective, ethical development, because the self is

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<sup>834</sup> Walzel, *German Romanticism*, pp. 40-43; 58-59.

in constant flight from itself as an ethical task to be worked upon.<sup>835</sup> And while empty selfhood is experienced as a prison, there can be no ultimate evasion of the self: there really is no way out in the direction in which the aesthete is looking.

In the *Figure of Beatrice*, Charles Williams also identifies this ‘place’, or predicament in which Kierkegaard’s aesthete finds himself, through his theological interpretation of the poetry of Dante Alighieri. In the first Canto of the *Inferno*, this subjective wasteland is symbolised as a dark wood in which Dante<sup>836</sup> has lost his way in the midst of life. In the wood, Dante’s way is blocked by a she-wolf,<sup>837</sup> an image of the state of self-will or selfish desire that is threatening to consume him. A figure of insatiable hunger, the wolf tracks the poet, impeding movement out of the wood and causing him to regress ever deeper into it. The wolf is depicted as uncannily shadowing, yet determining, his every move. Virgil has been sent to Dante’s aid by the celestial Beatrice, and warning him of the wolf he explains that

So bad and so accursed is her kind,  
That never sated is her ravenous will,  
Still after food more craving than before.<sup>838</sup>

The symbolic world of Dante is informed by Thomistic cosmology, and Williams interprets the imagery of the great poet in terms of his own, romantic theology. In this opening canto, Dante’s character is met at a moment of crisis, a moment of vital decision. In his youth, the poet had experienced a vision of pure, aesthetic beauty, an intimation of eschatological fulfilment. In interpreting the figure of Beatrice which overwhelms him, the young Dante experiences the promise of salvation as in a way already present, but still not yet attained: a living presence of ultimate possibility is glimpsed in the figure of a girl moving along a Florentine street in the late thirteenth century. This Beatrician event, as first described by Dante in his *Vita Nuova*, is, in Pauline terms,<sup>839</sup> an intimation of the salvation achieved once for all time upon the Cross, and yet, paradoxically *as* that final achievement, still awaiting consummation.

Beatrice is an ordinary girl in Florence, as fallible as anyone else, yet she is also the presentiment, for Dante, of her and his future beatitude, as glimpsed in an aesthetic response of love. It is to be noted that Williams follows Wordsworth, in *The Figure of Beatrice* and elsewhere, in focusing on a concept of the ‘feeling intellect’: a kind of imaginatively reflective, interpretive insight that is seen as the height of intellectual attainment, an intimation of an

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<sup>835</sup> Kierkegaard, *Either/Or* part 1, p. 49.

<sup>836</sup> That is, the narrator of the poem: the poet’s self-characterisation in verse.

<sup>837</sup> Dante Alighieri, *The Vision of Dante*, Henry Francis Cary (tr.), (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), *Inferno*, Canto I, ll. 50-56; (Cary chose to adopt this title for his translation of what is more commonly known as Dante’s *Divine Comedy*).

<sup>838</sup> Dante, *Inferno*, Canto I, ll. 93-95.

<sup>839</sup> David Horrell, *An Introduction to the Study of Paul*, (London: Continuum, 2000), pp. 66-67.

‘unknown mode of being’<sup>840</sup> as combining, in a holistic, or ‘existential’ kind of insight, vital, affective and cognitive elements in poetic vision,<sup>841</sup> through aesthetic response to the mystery of experienced beauty, and through the creative interpretation of that explorative response in verse. But, importantly, this image of Beatrice presents Dante with an *ethical* choice, and Williams holds that this is the case with all powerful aesthetic experience. Dante, in the poem, can either relate to the image manipulatively for the sake of immediate sensory gratification, or relate to it in open-hearted and attentive, imaginative receptivity, in willingness to discover, to be led beyond his present horizons.

Thinking through the consequences of an ethical receptivity to beauty, Williams points to Dante’s equation of the image of the human form and philosophy, in another work, the *Convivio*:<sup>842</sup> ‘the difficulties of the *Summa* seen as a compassionate lady? Yes, no doubt, but also the mysteries of a compassionate lady seen as another kind of *Summa*’.<sup>843</sup> We have seen that, for Williams, the body is an organised index of the organising logos, structuring the universe; Dante expresses his relational appreciation of the potential significance of human beauty thus: the ‘divine light “radiates into her – I mean, in her speech and in those acts which we call her bearing and her behaviour”’.<sup>844</sup> I think it is important to underline the essential relationality of such insights: it is in loving attentiveness to human otherness, that is also an aesthetic appreciation, that Dante becomes ethically more than he could have been before; the *ethics* of beauty were manifested to him in relation to a particular individual: through loving attention he himself grows in love, and as Williams makes clear, to grow in love is to grow in God.<sup>845</sup>

So in the poem *La Vita Nuova*, which recounts the birth of his love for Beatrice, the youthful Dante is faced with the choice between growing in love (and, indeed, into divine Love), or merely basking in the sheer sensual pleasure of his awakening to the beauty of a human form. Years later, at the beginning of the *Inferno*, we have witnessed Dante’s experience of spiritual *impasse*, having fallen from the ‘way of affirmation of images’ (Williams’ description of the aesthetic *via positiva* that his theology explores). The existential decision arising from a purely aesthetic encounter is between the ‘dark wood’ of aesthetic emptiness, an ego-centric flight from true selfhood and ethical growth, which Kierkegaard so vividly portrays in *Either/Or*, and the attentive willingness to see the other as an index to the archetype of all beauty, and to grow

<sup>840</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 14.

<sup>841</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 62; Charles Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), p. 32.

<sup>842</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, pp. 60-68.

<sup>843</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 60.

<sup>844</sup> Dante, *Convivio* (III, vii), quoted in Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p.63.

<sup>845</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 158.

through loving fidelity to the aesthetic image: a willingness to forego hedonistic manipulative strategies.

The hedonistic aesthete, as delineated through the first part of *Either/Or*, avoids the demands of self-development by relating to himself solely through thought, as an objectification of himself. Kierkegaard's aesthete is utterly self-alienated: as if lost deep in Dante's dark wood, he will not recognise that to know the truth about oneself is not a matter of mere theory. For Kierkegaard, thought by itself is powerless to give one *actual* knowledge of oneself, since it relates only to whom one might possibly become: it is mere potentiality. A truly existential thinker takes upon himself to become the content of his thought, to embody it through self-activity. Really to know oneself, one must become what one knows, and this may prove utterly different from what one had imagined before the sphere of ethical actuality was entered through decision. Thus for Kierkegaard, ethico-religious truth is essentially un-pre-thinkable, and is so most radically in relation to paradoxical Christian revelation: existence's highest relational opportunity, as an intimation of its true, eschatological fulfilment. The final word concerning who we are to be is Christ's – not ours.

For Kierkegaard, self-determination through decision is fundamental to the structure of existence, of subjectivity. Even the avoidance of personal commitment is a matter of personal responsibility, for which there is a price to pay.<sup>846</sup> The nature of Kierkegaard's understanding of decision, and thus the reason for the central importance of the concept of decision within the Kierkegaardian project, are brought out most clearly in relation to his critique of Hegelian idealism.<sup>847</sup> Hegel's 'movement' of dialectical thought is shown to be an illusion of process. Transformation of thought patterns occurs over the course of people's lives, by virtue of the quality of their situation and interactions, and such transformation is a temporal process. *People's* thoughts change, but Hegelian dialectical movement is an abstraction from the reality of thinking, which is always a property of interactive, embodied thinkers enduring and altering through changes in circumstances, and whose thought processes develop and change accordingly. Hegelian dialectical change, the 'process' of conceptually driven 'movements' in metaphysical logic, is nothing but a concept of change, itself an unchanging thought with no power of self-alteration. Existence as a process is oriented through the dynamism of the will. In so far as an existent human being is a thinker, his thoughts will change, but the dynamism belongs to the existing individual, not to his capacity to think treated as an abstract metaphysical principle.

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<sup>846</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 253.

<sup>847</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 342.

For Kierkegaard, ethical decisions actually occur in existential time, an enduring growth process, as we have learned from Bergson. Hegelian dialectical movement, on the other hand, is illusory. The passage from possibility to actuality, the movement to decisive action, or from thought to reality, from plan to effect or from the possibility of belief to active faith, is actually un-sayable, in so far as it is an actual movement, a conversion or commitment of the will to act in a given manner. That this conversion-in-commitment is literally un-sayable, in itself, is because words express concepts, which, as generalisations, are merely abstractions from moving reality. As we learned from Bergson, words are names or notations cut out of the temporal flux, and such labels lack movement, as intrinsically inert. Therefore words cannot state the processive medium from which they have been abstracted. As static momentary snapshots of moving reality, words derive from the temporal flow, but are not imbued with its dynamism. Potential belief turns into active faith through time, whereas the conceptual abstractions of Hegelian ‘pure’ thought have in themselves no independent temporal existence, and what does not itself manifest motility cannot be said to change or endure in its own right. Existent actuality is temporal; thought’s reality is, in contrast to actual existence, a-temporal potentiality. The knowledge that a decision has been reached is not itself the actual process of deciding.<sup>848</sup> Neither is knowing what love is like the actual experience of falling in love, any more than studying human nature is the same as leading a particular style of life.

Like Bergson, therefore, Kierkegaard points out the inadequacy of words and concepts to discern the flowing movement of actual life. Just as Bergson criticises Kant’s ‘spatialised’ timeline, as we have seen, so Kierkegaard objects to Hegel’s illusory interaction of concepts in pure thought. We will see in the last chapter how some romantic thinkers saw the same deficiency. Wackenroder and Schopenhauer both realised that music can discover the nature of the flow of emotional experience: where words generalise, music can present the shades and nuances of emotional movement. With the same insight, Susanne Langer notes that music functions as a ‘presentational’, purely connotative symbolism. Kierkegaard’s point is that the development of spirit is not something that one can discover objectively, as Hegel would have it, by finding out through his publications that the ‘world-spirit’ has now overcome Christianity by fulfilling and making overt, as absolute idealism, its hitherto undeveloped and imagistic, conceptual content. Rather, Kierkegaard points out that to develop spiritually is for an existing subjectivity to grow and develop over time through the rigorous effort of self-activity.<sup>849</sup>

However, I believe that focused as he was on the need to defend ethical realities in the face of the Hegelian project, and of Schlegelian romantic irony, Kierkegaard could not or did not

<sup>848</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 344.

<sup>849</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 343.

envisage the possibility of any genuine ethical decision-making emerging from within the aesthetic dimension of existence. In this regard, I suggest that he interpreted the aesthetic sphere too narrowly, and thus tarred all sensible aesthetic appreciation with the same, Schlegelian brush, as it were. Even Friedrich Schlegel himself moved away from the purely Fichtean origins of his thinking, inspired by Schelling's *natürphilosophie* and Schleiermacher's conception of religion in terms of ontological feeling.<sup>850</sup>

Williams' approach to aesthetics recognises the real, ethical possibilities inherent in aesthetic experience, and thus its potential pitfalls: pitfalls which involve the possibility of refusing to choose between selfish sensuality and ethically responsive attentiveness altogether. In the *Inferno*, Dante and his guide, Virgil encounters Limbo, the place of what Williams describes as 'the suspended imagination'.<sup>851</sup> Here, Williams says, are all those who have neither chosen to serve love, nor to have love serve them; but not to choose is also to experience the Hell of willed non-being. The souls in Limbo experience the emptiness which Kierkegaard's anonymous aesthete is compelled to, but unable to flee from: the inner emptiness that leads ultimately to the hellish state of 'never for ever'.<sup>852</sup> The souls in Limbo that would not decide, just as much as those who chose egotism in Hell proper, have equally 'willingly insisted on the necessity of their own wishes'.<sup>853</sup>

Further into the *Inferno*, in the first circle of hell, Francesca da Rimini and Paolo, her adulterous lover, are encountered by Dante, both of them eternally ensnared in the choice of their own sensual gratification. Francesca and her lover are locked into what Williams describes as 'the first, tender, passionate, and half-excusable consent of the soul to sin'.<sup>854</sup> The excuse however is, 'precisely', the sin.<sup>855</sup> What Dante describes as 'lussuria' is self-yielding or indulgence, and thus the opposite of the displacement of the ego. The choice is between the *via positiva*, or way of affirmation of images, and their self-interested manipulation: in terms of Dante's poetry, between the image of Beatrice and the image of Francesca.

For Williams this is a choice between Francescan pseudo-romanticism and Beatrician romanticism;<sup>856</sup> between self-interested wallowing and manipulation – making oneself, and not Love, the centre – and spiritual growth through imaginative, empathic insight. I believe this to be a key distinction as regards the argument of my thesis, because it sheds light on what I perceive to be the flaw in Kierkegaard's stance towards aesthetic experience and imagery.

<sup>850</sup> Walzel, *German Romanticism*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>851</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 116.

<sup>852</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 114.

<sup>853</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 115.

<sup>854</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 117.

<sup>855</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 118.

<sup>856</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 132.

Ethical decision arises within the aesthetic sphere, unavoidably. One can ethically choose to grow through a response of what Kant might describe as disinterested interest, to respect the alterity of the image, personal or artistic, or one can choose to manipulate others hedonistically, or in another and equally perverse aspect, sentimentally choose to falsify the terms of one's engagement with reality, in either case distorting the truth for some perception or calculation of gain. Pleasure, fear, avoidance of pain, whatever the motive for the self-indulgent choice might be, Dante shows us that an all-consuming egotist could well end up eating out his own heart for all eternity.

But ethical decision, for Kierkegaard, can only represent a move entirely away from the aesthetic into a separate ethical sphere.<sup>857</sup> Nevertheless, we have seen that any crude understanding – in terms of a direct 'fiat' of the will – of the nature of the decision that mediates between Kierkegaard's existential spheres is indeed mitigated by Ferreira's uncovering of the role of imaginative activity in such transitions. But Kierkegaard still cannot admit that any externalised or artistic imaginative activity and receptivity could play a role in ethical decision making, and this is the case in spite of the indirect, aesthetic nature of his own project of anonymous authorship. Kierkegaard's Christian irony tries to enable an awareness of a paradoxical truth that could never, in principle, come to direct and thus non-paradoxical statement: the reality of the God-man. This consideration goes to show that poetic creativity and appreciation demand a place in Kierkegaard's thinking which, however, he is unwilling to grant them. I believe that Charles Williams' thinking offers a model of a kind of ethical aesthetics that would be compatible with the Kierkegaardian project. Williams discovers a moment of decision arising within the sphere of the aesthetic, as an intrinsically ethical choice.

In Williams' terminology, one might say that Kierkegaard can only discern the possibility of a 'Francescan' aesthetic, of an egotistical aesthetic relation, in spite of the aesthetic qualities of his own pseudonymous authorship, and the purpose which he seeks to serve through such a use of poetically indirect communication of truth. Williams would regard the aesthetic relation as portrayed in *Either/Or* as an aberration, but makes a distinction between egocentricity and an aesthetic norm of disinterested interest. For Kierkegaard, on the other hand, the aberrant relation is the norm. Given his high valuation of human embodied-ness, it should be noted that Williams takes pains to point out that he is not advocating some sort of sexual Puritanism.<sup>858</sup> The question is the appropriateness of response in any given situation. In some contexts physical enjoyment is central to the fruition of aesthetic experience. But for physical pleasure to be an appropriate

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<sup>857</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 253.

<sup>858</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 65.

response, it would involve the mutuality of self-giving love, and be part of a wider loving relationship: as Williams writes, ‘the intention of fidelity is the safeguard of romanticism’.<sup>859</sup>

Williams notes two stages that are involved in relation to the Beatrician response. At first, in the *Vita Nuova*, Dante is immediately affected by the appearance of Beatrice: ‘la sua immagine’.<sup>860</sup> This image brings on a reaction, which Dante describes as a ‘quality’ of himself towards Beatrice.<sup>861</sup> This could be described, I think, as an existential reaction, as it affects Dante (according to the physiological understanding of his time) holistically, in all three aspects of his being: the ‘spirit of life’ in the heart; the ‘animal spirit’ in the perceptual faculty; the ‘natural spirit’, or seat of organic life.<sup>862</sup> Dante’s whole being responds, including his ‘spiritual emotions and intellectual perceptions’, recognising and experiencing a newly emergent quality of his being: love. Later on the quality of love is said to affect Dante in the form of an agony of choice. At first, Dante revelled in the sheer experience of his feelings towards Beatrice, noting how it imbued his reactions to all around him. But love later appears to him in a dream, telling him ‘I am the centre of a circle to which all parts of the circumference are in a similar relation; but you are not so’.<sup>863</sup> Williams points out that this mysterious utterance bears a striking resemblance to St. Bonaventure’s famous dictum, ‘God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere’. For Bonaventure, God is omnipresent, and therefore every loving encounter is potentially an opening up of a way to God, a *via affirmativa*. God is at the centre of each human being, and human being is essentially relational: our personal relations thus find their ultimate fruition in relation to their Trinitarian archetypes. But Dante’s dream considers the love relation from another, complimentary aspect to that of Bonaventure. God is love itself, whereas the love which Dante experiences in relation to Beatrice is an ‘accident’, (in scholastic terminology): a quality of his being. Dante is not substantial love, but whether he experiences love or not still depends on external circumstances: he is on the periphery of a love that is in itself infinite; a centre without circumference. Dante is still relating love to his finite ego, with the ego at the centre of his experienced world, rather than displacing his ego by subordinating his own self-interest to love, which, in its divine origination, is in fact his true self-interest. So his dream of love personified tells him ‘flee away, if you find it tiresome to perish’.<sup>864</sup>

Dante is faced, therefore, with a decision: he can continue to bask in what Kierkegaard might describe as the ‘sensuous immediacy’ of *Either/Or*, indulging his pleasure until it inevitably

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<sup>859</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 51.

<sup>860</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 19.

<sup>861</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 18.

<sup>862</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>863</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 24.

<sup>864</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 25.



palls, (as pall, in time, it must), or he can place his experience at the service of love, rather than manipulating his experience of love. The choice decides whether he will undergo ‘a little death’, recognising that his ego is not the centre, that he is a creature, not the Creator. He says ‘I have set my feet in that part of life beyond which it is not possible to go with any intention of return’; ‘I grow drunk with a great trembling, and seem to hear the very stones crying out to me “Die, die!”’.<sup>865</sup> Williams comments that this is the ‘choice of self preservation and self-loss’. Beauty and joy are ‘absolute over him’: for Dante, it is either ‘flight or death’.

What if Dante had not chosen to serve love, but to manipulate it as a self-centred creature (and thus a contradiction in terms: the experienced non-being of hell for Dante, and subjective despair for Kierkegaard)? At the beginning of the *Inferno* we meet Dante years after the events of the *Vita Nuova*, and he is, as we have seen, at crisis-point. Lost in a wood of self-deceit, he faces a wolf, the symbol of the course which his self-centred desire is set upon. Here Dante has lost sight of love, ‘il bel del’*intelletto*’, and is confronted by the image of the wolf as the opposite of the image of Beatrice: the refusal of the little death which is the self-displacement of the *via positiva*.

The insatiable wolf is Dante’s anti-telos, as it were, and ‘lean with infinite craving’: a figure for self-will. Kierkegaard’s aesthete is described, in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, as essentially ‘a depression’, a void where there should be an active subjectivity: ‘an existence possibility which cannot attain existence’.<sup>866</sup> Williams would agree that the insatiability of the wolf of self-will is inevitably self-destructive. And yet where Kierkegaard can only envisage the *via negativa*, in spite of his own creativity in religiously significant writing, Williams celebrates the way of affirmation of images.

#### **(4) Kierkegaard, Williams & Shakespeare: A Reconciliation of Indirect Communication and Poetry**

It is important to note that the way of human relationships is, for Williams, only one possible method of the affirmative way. For example,<sup>867</sup> Williams speaks of Wordsworth as pursuing romantic affirmation through the imagery of nature, and symbolism is the key to the way, whichever images it is focused through. Williams follows Coleridge in defining symbolism. As we have already learned in an earlier chapter, the Coleridgean symbol must have its own subsistence, whilst being derived from and representing that greater whole from which it

<sup>865</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 25.

<sup>866</sup> Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* vol. 1, p. 253.

<sup>867</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 7.

derives.<sup>868</sup> In *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, Williams explores a mode of the way of affirmation whose symbolic value resides solely in poetic style.

For Williams, the *style alone* of Shakespeare's late plays is the uniquely distinctive medium through which a possible eschatological order is glimpsed, albeit evanescently. Here I find the corrective to Kierkegaard's self-defeating failure to admit the possibility of a *via positiva* that would also make sense within the theoretical matrix of Kierkegaardian thought, and that could thus offer a rationale for Kierkegaard's own practice of indirect communication in terms that he might recognise as related to the existential outlook and parameters of his own thinking.

In order to understand what Williams has to say about the nature of late Shakespearian drama, it will be helpful to look first, and in some depth, at what I believe to be the implications of his theory of the nature of poetic reality as stylistically mediated.<sup>869</sup> By interacting related themes and findings pertaining to Coleridge's thought, as previously discovered, with that of Williams, I hope to enhance insight into the thinking of both, as I find their suggestions to be reciprocally enriching.

Williams regards a poetic style as a verbally embodied form of articulation: a rhythmic, sensible patterning which conveys the 'how?' of a given theme, by which I mean the manner in which a disclosure about the poet's world or imagined order is expressed,<sup>870</sup> or how its reality is imaginatively construed. In fact, the nature of that envisaged order is given through an overarching vision, and this is primarily disclosed by the manner of the arrangement in which his words, or *what* he has to say, is conveyed. Diction, or choice of words conveys this 'what?' through plot, character-description and dialogue. But the world in which characters move and interact is conveyed through an overall, imaginatively construed patterning: through the poet's distinctive style: '*The poet, as well as the reader, discovers (i) his own method of experiencing, (ii) his own method of communicating that experience.*'<sup>871</sup> What the poet *thinks* he may want to say may be radically different from what emerges within the overall pattern of the poetry, as his images come to life through a unique stylistic arrangement of materials. A poetic, formally constructive act is itself an investigation of the 'how' or manner in which an aesthetic experience unfolds to, for and, importantly, with the attentive, co-operative, interpretive activity of the poet.

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<sup>868</sup> Williams, *The Figure of Beatrice*, p. 11.

<sup>869</sup> I offer an extended reflection here on pp. 1-16 of *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, in light of findings of earlier chapters with reference to Kant and Coleridge.

<sup>870</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, p. 6.

<sup>871</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, p. 6.

At this point, I will go beyond Williams' text, in light of our earlier engagement with the aesthetic thinking of Coleridge, to propose an experience of landscape as an example of an aesthetic experience. Such an experience would unfold as a unique relationship between the poet and what he sees: Williams 'method of experiencing', as quoted above. The aesthetic experience has an intrinsically relational mode of being: like a rainbow, it exists as the interaction between the object seen and the subjective view. In Coleridge's terms, object and subject interpenetrate and the interpenetration *is* the aesthetic, interpretive experience. Before the writing of a poem is attempted, interpretation is already embodied in and as the unique quality of aesthetic disclosure. The experienced landscape must be distinguished from the subject experiencing and the object experienced; it is an imaginative reality, a reflective indwelling of the landscape by the poet, a permeation of inner and outer realities. The aesthetic experience, the interpenetration of object and subject in a specific manner or method of experiencing is an imaginative mode of being, *sui generis*, and as such, irreducible to either of its subjective or objective aspects. Therefore not *what* is seen, but *how* it is seen is the aesthetic experience, and poetic communication will depend primarily on the poet's imaginative ability to construe this unique mode of experience through the arrangement of words in an overarching *style*: a formal 'idea', in the Kantian sense of aesthetic idea, or organising principle of the poem. According to the organic conception of aesthetics addressed in relation to Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and Coleridge's aesthetics, the words as parts will derive their significance from their place in the overarching whole, within the style or imaginative ordering: the 'how' of the 'what' that is being said.

The style itself is obviously never something *directly* expressed, as a mode of being and not an entity. The style is read between the lines, as it were, it is the organising dynamic of the arrangement of the lines and of the words within the lines, the imaginative medium through which they render the relational quality of the reality of the original aesthetic experience: *how* subjectivity interacts with objectivity. Specific contents thus take on a unique, relational significance within an imaginative construal ordering a poetic whole, which itself expresses an original permeation of content and form, of landscape and subjectively receptive engagement (according to our example).

The mode of being of the poet's aesthetic experience is externalised in his creative expression of that experience, but what emerges might not, perhaps, be what the poet first envisaged himself expressing. The act of ordering his experience in effect reconstructs, re-construes it. While there is an analogy between actual experience and poetic reality, the reality of the poem is an integrity in its own right. The analogue is not a mere copy, but an imaginative recreation of the experience of landscape. The authentic affective quality of the poet's encounter with

nature can thus only be accessible to an imaginatively empathic interpretation on the part of the reader, *as a dynamic mode of experience only indirectly communicated, and indeed only indirectly communicable, through its poetic analogue.*

Only *what* is said can be directly communicated through verbal labelling. Essences or quiddities can be defined exactly, but dynamic movement, the flow of emotional response and the particular aesthetic colouration lent by interpretation to that which inspires it, *unfolds after a particular manner through time*, and this durational quality of experience, to which Bergson pointed us in an earlier chapter, *can only be indirectly expressed.*

In Kantian terms, the poet's attentively open and reactive interaction with nature, the free movement and interplay of conceptuality and imagination, manifests poetically as an aesthetic idea, or dynamic focus for conceptual reflection. More simply, in Williams' terms, this is the poem's style; in Kierkegaard's terms, this is aesthetically indirect communication.

Thus the meaning of a poet's experience, embodied in a poem, becomes manifest 'between the lines' as an indirect stylistic communication. Style is a formal pattern, a finite construct for Williams, through which the conceptually indeterminable quality of the movement of experience is encapsulated, in indirect translation. The formal stylistic pattern gives access, by intimation, to a directly inexpressible manner of being (the poet's mode of interaction with the natural scene). The style thus bodies forth a unique, finite perspective on an infinite, in the sense of conceptually indeterminable, experience.

The poem's style is *how* the poet communicates his experience, but it is also an opportunity for the reader as the communication of an interpretive possibility, having the power to enrich the reader's future engagement with reality, potentially extending his horizons of experience. In so doing, the poem can potentially introduce new possibilities for the reader's subjective becoming. *Who* the reader is can be altered and enriched by extending his capacities to feel and participate in the world around him, exploring hitherto unsuspected modes of engagement with reality.

Like a Coleridgean symbol, this poetic, stylistic construct is neither subjective nor objective, but more than, though transformatively inclusive of both poles of experience, as focused through the burning lens of imagination. Even though the poetic style is the work of the poet, who could be said in one sense to impose the structure on the material, it would be equally true to say that the poetic act will also modify and enrich the poet, as we have suggested that the act of poetic reconstruction of experience will externalise it, and thus constitute a new mode of relation to his

own experience: an unsuspected aspect of it, that could not have been suspected before the process of writing. The experience and the poet will both change through the act of poetic construction. As Williams expresses it, the poem ‘has absorbed into itself not merely the fact [what is expressed] but the poet experiencing the fact, and has made a harmony of both – has indeed made a new thing of both, which is to us a new experience’.<sup>872</sup> I now move to examine a uniquely important instance of such stylistic, poetic indirection.

Williams discerns three stages in Shakespeare’s aesthetic development.<sup>873</sup> In the early plays, (for example, the ‘history plays’), concentration is focussed on plot, on logical sequencing of events. The overriding linguistic concern is with the *direct* expression of *what* happens. A second stage of development, represented by the great tragedies, (for example, Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear), focuses attention of character interaction. *How* relationships are played out, *how* or in what manner characters develop through dynamic interaction becomes the dominant aesthetic concern. Through the gradual disclosure of characters in interaction, Shakespeare is able to intimate, suggestively, through a *rhetorically indirect* use of language, an overarching ‘metaphysical’ picture of distortions in the cosmic ordering of his imagined world: Shakespeare indirectly shows us through the disrupted and destructive patterning of human relationships *how* the ‘times are out of joint’. If the early plays primarily *denote* significance through the verbal construction of plot-lines, the middle period tragedies indirectly *connote* or intimate metaphysical insights through dialogical character disclosure. In a final phase, represented by the late comedies, Shakespeare, according to Williams, relativises considerations of both plot and character – the objective denoting of the ‘what’ and the inter-subjective connotation of the ‘how’ of his aesthetic vision – in a manner reminiscent of the view of poetic creativity that we have just been examining, above. In this third phase of Shakespeare’s creative development, Williams suggests, echoing Coleridge, that both plot and character disclosure interact to become as it were translucent to one another in a purely stylistic, organisational ‘reconciliation of discordant elements’ in verse which is organised around the construction of a pregnant moment or perhaps *Χαίρος*: a finite, cumulative ‘moment’ of significance intimating an eternal wholeness through the sheer power of an informing style.<sup>874</sup> Speaking, for example, of the characters of Miranda and Ferdinand in *The Tempest*, Williams writes:

Those two exist for and in their moment alone. The unities of dramatic concentration are so present – as they always should be but rarely are – that all past and future maybe felt in the instant, but as the instant and not as themselves. Truth and beauty, from whatever cause, are here absolutely one in the perfection of Shakespeare’s style; itself as magical as the enchanted island, as earthly as

<sup>872</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>873</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, pp. 166-167.

<sup>874</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, p. 171.

Caliban, as elemental as Ariel, as lovely as Miranda. In a too rash fantasy the island itself might seem to float for its permitted hour in its ocean as the earth itself might seem to float in blue space, and upon it the principles of human life, incarnate in forms, live and move and are harmoniously united in the composure of delight. But so far a dream is our own dallying with the innocence of love; we may indulge but not impose it. We must not repose upon anything but the style – the manner of diction and rhythm, the purpose and dramatic meaning with which the diction and rhythms were used.<sup>875</sup>

The aesthetic vision of an eschatological order is nonsense in direct statement, or in terms of ‘fancy’ as distinct from productive ‘imagination’, as we have learned to differentiate them with Coleridge. True religious significance may be intimated indirectly, through the tensile unity of style, as a ‘Coleridgean symbol’ or Kantian ‘aesthetic idea’. Williams regards the style of late Shakespearian drama as a summit of such aesthetically indirect vision.

Through the manner in which Shakespeare interacts his materials, a higher order of vision comes to expression, though through nothing more than a certain unique ‘method of experiencing’ in terms of the organisation of linguistic significances.<sup>876</sup> Williams contends that in Shakespeare’s later works, in plays such as *Cymbelene* or *The Tempest*, a vision of order restored, of times no longer ‘out of joint’ emerges.

Like light dispersing a mist,<sup>877</sup> Shakespeare’s imaginative horizon clears in the late dramas, and does so *utterly unforeseeably*, as supervening upon the rigorously envisioned, and relentlessly carried-out self-implosion of his imaginative world in the middle period tragedies.<sup>878</sup> Those dark works embody the fruits of a willingness to look into the abyss of human self-destructiveness, as born of a persistent aesthetic truthfulness, *and as such*, an ethical honesty of character observation.

## **Conclusion**

This study of Williams’ romantically and existentially informed theology has attempted to explore the possibilities of a genuinely un-foreseeable, or un-pre-thinkable process of artistic discovery, through which intimations of religious significance may dawn upon an ethically attentive, aesthetic receptivity. Williams calls the first chapter of *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind* ‘The Ostentation of Verse’. As we have seen in this chapter, Williams claims that

<sup>875</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, p. 184-185.

<sup>876</sup> Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, p. 6.

<sup>877</sup> ‘The Dispersal of Mist’ is the title of Chapter X of *Reason and beauty in the Poetic Mind*, in which Williams addresses late Shakespearian drama: (pp. 169-186).

<sup>878</sup> See Chapter IX, ‘The Abolition of Significance’, in Williams, *Reason and Beauty in the Poetic Mind*, pp. 129-168.

poetic reality, through its highlighting of the patterned nature of all human experience – its interpretive and perspectival character – is intrinsically truer to experienced reality than prose, which tends to foster the illusion of a God’s eye view, a ‘view from nowhere’. I hope in the foregoing paragraphs to have indicated how aesthetically reflected experience and its poetic communication might disclose truths to which objective prose may be completely blind. It is reasonable to suggest, on this basis, that freed from the theological stumbling block of an overarching metaphysical apriorism, the claims, examined earlier, of romantic *natürphilosophie* and aesthetic theory to open a vista onto a dynamic *natura naturans* (completely overlooked by a narrow, Enlightenment conception of reason) may be shown to have some basis in actual aesthetic and poetic experience. I have sought to integrate my findings regarding Kierkegaard, Coleridge, Bergson and Kant, through an examination of Williams’ poetic theology. In addressing Williams’ interpretation of Dante in *The Figure of Beatrice*, my exploration of a common motivation between Kierkegardian theological ethics and a specifically Christian account of romantic aesthetics has been deepened along the lines of the ethico-aesthetic model laid down in chapter seven of my thesis. Finally, in focusing on one particular example of a poetic style, that of the late plays of William Shakespeare, as Williams sees it, I have discovered a specific, religiously significant use of indirect, stylistic communication in action *as* poetic art, thus justifying a role for poetry in the indirect communication of religious truth, reconciling Kierkegaard to his own aesthetic practice.





## **APPENDIX 2**

### **The Tradition of Imagination as a Metaphysical Mediating Principle**

This idea of a medium between matter and mind derives from very ancient roots in the philosophy of imagination. The Neo-Platonists Porphyry, Iamblichus and Synesius discuss variations of an idea of imaginative mediation between hypostatic Mind or *Nous*, and the World-Soul emanating from it. Imagination or *Phantasia* is said to be the aetherial or astral body – a tenuous reality halfway between matter and mind – that mediates between the intelligible and sensible realms of being, and in Iamblichus, the medium of Divine, oracular communication. Drawing on a Stoic, pantheistic conception of *Pneuma* or *Spiritus* – a quasi-material, breath-like, and thus intangible medium of the World-Soul's unity – the imagination is regarded as a metaphysical vesture, the first bodily shape into which the immortal and immaterial rational element of the human soul descends, and through which it can perceive itself as reflected in the multiple shapes of the rationally structured world, which are its own otherness. This conception of imagination, or *phantasia* as a medium between the mind and the senses ultimately derives from Aristotelean psychology.

See Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, Emma C. Clarke, John M. Dillon and Jackson P. Hershbell (tr.) (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 3.11, 3.14; P. Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, Michael Chase (tr.) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 59-60, 332-3; J. M. Cocking, *Imagination: A Study in the History of Ideas*, (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 61-2.



### **APPENDIX 3**

#### **Bergson's Critique of Kantian Time: Intensive Magnitude**

We have seen how Bergsonian philosophical intuition gains in rational clarity in the light of Kant's aesthetic mode of conceptually indeterminate judgement. Here we will see in more detail how Bergson's thinking, in turn, can enable effective critical insight to be brought to bear on Kant's under-nourished and spatialised concept of time. In the light of what Bergson has to say in this regard, we can deepen our understanding of how that Kant's findings concerning time are only true in relation to determinate, empirical knowledge.

While Bergson appropriates Kantian insights about the nature of organisms in reflecting upon duration, he is strictly opposed to any traditional conception of teleology, or final causation, in elaborating his metaphysic. We have seen in chapter four that Bergson's philosophy of metaphysical process is to be preferred to Schelling's romantic idealism on theological grounds. Revelatory theology cannot be subordinated to a philosophical conceptual scheme that can know the nature of ultimate reality in advance. Bergson's thinking, as we also saw in that chapter, prioritises and promotes emergent novelty. The Bergsonian future arises in the course of meaningful process, but no Kantian time-line is drawn on which to plot that future, translating a flow of qualitative difference into schematic, or quantitatively based re-patternings of the past.

Bergson criticises Kant over his account of the category of quality, both in the section on 'Schematism' and in the 'Anticipations of Sense Perception', in the Critique of Pure Reason. Kant's schematism of quality (according to judgemental moments of reality, limitation and negation) deals with the transcendental determination of the reality of sensation, considered as a material factor in empirical perception in independence from its spatio-temporal formal conditions. But this consideration is in terms of continuous quantity, as measurable in degrees. It is to this quantification of experiential quality that Bergson objects.

In his *Time and Free Will*, Bergson maintains the irreducibly qualitative nature of the temporal succession of consciousness. Bergson argues against Kant that the concept of 'intensive magnitude', through which he attempts to measure qualitative change, is incoherent. We will discuss the Kantian concept of intensive magnitude below. Bergson deems it a bogus quantity, misrepresenting fluid, qualitative transition. Bergson insists that the flow of consciousness cannot be adequately measured, and thus translated in terms of quantity, because any accurate calculation of qualitative experience is intrinsically impossible. The Bergsonian position I am argued for, against Kant, can be summarised as follows: there can be no *degrees* of sensation,

but only ‘sensation of *degree*’. Once acknowledged, this criticism can be usefully related to Kant’s account of time and imagination. I shall now explain what I mean.

For Kant, elements of being and non-being are always co-implicated in the knowledge of any finite reality. This is because Kantian objectivity is a unification in judgement for a transcendental subjectivity, and all acts of judgement negate: by affirming something, all other possibilities for judgement are ruled out. All affirmation in judgement is also negation, as the thing affirmed is both limited and enabled through its relation to everything else. The being of anything is not only thus limited through judgement, but through that very judgemental negation or limitation, it is formally constituted in relation to everything else. This means that positive, finite identification can only be arrived at in terms of negation.

The judgement of something’s actuality, a cognitive act of its objective unification for transcendental subjectivity, constitutes the *form* of that thing as an *extensive* magnitude in time and space, the forms of intuition. Kant however wants to say that such spatio-temporal unification in judgement is not all that an object is, (otherwise we would only be dealing with the form of a thing, and not its content-rich actuality). Over and above its spatio-temporality, the extra-subjective reality of a formally constructed thing is registered in a given sensation: a *datum* of consciousness. Kant says that this *sensation* of a thing is its *material* element, as distinct from its spatio-temporal form.

The matter of a thing fills the forms of space and time, and this filling of space and time can be measured, according to Kant, in terms of *degrees of intensity* of sensation. The object of judgemental unity is an empirical object that exists under conditions of transcendently ideal formal construction. But as empirically real, the object’s matter (its empirical matter as opposed to any super-sensible ground of appearance) affects sensation. This affecting or impacting on the part of the object is registered as a degree of sensation: an *intensive* magnitude, or the measurable degree of intensity of a received sensation. Importantly for Bergson’s argument (which we will be coming to soon), Kant sharply contrasts intensive magnitude to extensive magnitude, in so far as the transcendental imaginative synthesis relating to intensive magnitude, as a calculation of degree or quantity of sensation, is merely spatial, not temporal.

In general, the transcendental imaginative synthesis must involve a temporal, reproductive synthesis, (holding prior experience together with the present and anticipating the future). But the transcendental imagination also schematises – *a priori*, and according to the pure concept of ‘quality’ – the scale of degrees according to which the reality of any possible sensation can be

gauged. Such imaginative synthesis runs through a scale of degrees of reality involved in a given sensation. I shall explain.

An intensive magnitude (such as the intensity of heat, for example) is totally present all at once (as opposed to being made of spatio-temporal parts) and is thus simple. This means that the constitutive degrees involved in any sensation of heat are not added together sequentially, as is the case with an extensive magnitude, or quantitative aspect of an empirical object (which is transcendently discerned as a measurable occupancy of space and time, as we learned in chapter three). The schematism of the empirical matter of a possible object – the degree to which it affects sensibility – is an inclusive registration of all the lower degrees that combine to ‘add up’ to that degree, but in a non-sequential, or instantaneous act of the transcendental imagination.

Thus imagination synthesises the matter or given-ness of possible sensation according to a pre-set scale, assessing the relation between the interaction of being and non-being (e.g., the fluctuating presence of increasing and decreasing degrees of heat, or the absence of higher degrees of heat that is felt as cold). This assessment is therefore carried out in terms of the degree, or limitation of the quality sensed, the degree of the empirical reality of effectiveness of that quality of sensation.

In this way the schema of quality acts as an interpretive guide to the *a priori* application of transcendental concepts of reality, negation, and limitation, according to Kant. But Bergson would argue that such transcendental schematising of Kantian judgements of ‘quality’, as an assessment of sense data in terms of an *a priori* scale of degrees of intensity, or presence and absence, amounts to no more than the *quantification* of quality. Due to such necessary schematic guidance, sensation can be *anticipated* formally, as conformable to an *a priori* calibration. This means that, for Kant, there is a formally predictable aspect involved even in our receptivity to the given-ness of sensible contents; the formulaic and calculable nature of schematic procedure ensuring that a calculable aspect even of sensible data is always already knowable, in principle, in advance.

Bergson deals with these issues in his *Time and Free Will*. For Bergson, the quality of consciousness cannot be thus quantified. Therefore it cannot be calculated in terms of ‘degrees of reality’. Bergson insists that any such calculation implies that the quality of experiential contents has already been schematically translated into spatial terms (recalling our discussion of the schema of number in chapter three), so that it can be manipulated and predicted. In contrast

to such a translation, Bergson maintains that what endures is successive, and cannot be commensurable.

To measure is to compare co-present terms, to translate what is successive into simultaneity. Only simultaneities can be judged quantitatively. Succession is made countable by negating it *as* succession, and re-construing a moving whole in terms of homogeneous mental marks or abstract units. Such abstracted 'moments' are content-less, static points traced upon movement by calculative thought. One measurable moment is qualitatively indistinguishable from another.

A mental marker is thus abstracted from temporal progression to be carried forward in thought and numbered alongside the next mental mark. Such moments are thus really spatial units, thought of together or simultaneously with one another, and thus not really successive. This spatialising procedure presupposes an extent of space and time to be crossed, an area already all present, which a moving object must pass across. At different moments the object will be at different points along a linear trajectory. Only such points can be measured, the static marks which are as it were arranged in a row, that is to say, in space, like beads along a thread.

In contrast to this procedure of time measurement, which reconstrues time in terms of space, true succession resists analysis into composite moments. It is simple continuity of movement. Consciousness is simple, as an enduring reality. Such duration can be intuited, but not conceptually known. Ordinarily, intellect spatialises duration for practical purposes, but Bergson contends that intelligence can be turned inwards to raise instinctual life to consciousness, thereby intuiting life as a flowing reality. Bergson distances himself from romantic intellectual intuition (of Schelling, for example), since his intuition is of time, and not of an eternalised subjectivity enabling time. He therefore agrees with Kant that we can only know what is temporally intuitable, although he suggests that Kant's spatialised analysis of time is far from fundamental.

According to Kant there are two types of magnitude or quantity, intensive, schematised in terms of degree, and extensive, schematised in terms of number. An extensive magnitude is concerned with spatially located numerically measurable accumulations or co-existences. Bergson finds no problem with this: the intellect, as we have seen is directed to such spatial arrangements by its nature, as fitted to manipulate and calculate obstacles and opportunities. However Bergson detects a confusion in the notion of intensive *quantities* as measures of *qualities* of feeling in terms of degrees of magnitude.<sup>879</sup> Bergson's diagnosis of the confusion is that the cause of any given sensation *can* be measured (e.g., the felt brightness of one light as brighter than another is

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<sup>879</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 2-4.

due to a more powerful light bulb), and the quantifiability of the cause is assigned to the sensed effect. However, Bergson contends that no feeling can be more intense than another, and that the very term intensity used in relation to feeling is a mistaken categorisation of felt quality in terms of quantity.

For Bergson, the so-called intensity of any sensation is a matter of qualitative change in the *nature* of the feeling, not a matter of greater or lesser quantity, which could only be correctly applied to certain kinds of sensory stimulus (the *physical* electric bulb, rather than the quality of illumination; the *physiologically* quantifiable tension of muscles, as distinct from the *feeling* of strain).<sup>880</sup> Therefore, instead of speaking of a ‘more intense’ sensation of light or heat, one should say that one is now experiencing a *different kind* of heat to that which was felt before. Thinking in terms of the magnitude of such a sensation depends on ‘the physical ‘cause having been put into the effect’.<sup>881</sup> Thus one should not speak of an increase in pain, but of different kinds of painful sensation.

Bergson analyses the varying sensations involved with an increasing pressure applied to the surface of the body, (the variation in pressure, as a physical cause, unlike its effect – pain – is legitimately quantifiable). He suggests that one might first feel a contact, then a pressure, and then a pain: all distinct sensations, not a magnification of a single feeling. The pain itself goes through *qualitative* changes as it spreads over a given area. Again, the *area* affected is *quantifiable* in terms of *space*, and distinct from the sensation felt, but the feelings themselves undergo *qualitative* changes through the continuity of felt duration, merging and interpenetrating, but never analysable into homogeneous degrees as if along a spatial scale.<sup>882</sup> As we saw in the last chapter, feeling, living, *endures* as heterogeneous multiplicity, the past contributing to a qualitatively unique future, that is untranslatable into the mosaic snapshots, or psychological ‘states’, into which concepts analyse it. In the same way, the movement of events is not identical to the sequence of static frames that record them on a reel of film. Feeling, like movement, is incommensurable, unquantifiable in terms of homogeneous units or degrees, as simple yet heterogeneous continuity.

Bergson suggests that on hearing successive chimes of a clock,<sup>883</sup> the enduring sensations are similarly externalised or translated in terms of their cause as situated in space. The chimes are thought of as outside one another, as if arranged in a row, or passing in a parade. Such spatialised succession is a symbolic substitute for felt duration. The spatialised chimes are

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<sup>880</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>881</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 47.

<sup>882</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 48.

<sup>883</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 124.

estimated in terms of the sameness of the bell which is their cause, and each *chime* (a sound temporally and imaginatively apprehended as quality) of the bell is conceived as identical in so far as it is a *bell-chime* (emanating from a location in space). A translated experience of bell-chimes tends indeed towards homogeneity: it is no longer experienced as the qualitatively rich diversity of musical movement. One cannot count musical movement, but one can and does *superpose* the units of ‘bell-chime’, as numerical marker-translations aggregating or piling-up on top of one another in the spatialised convention that is ‘clock-time’. Where clock-time ‘marks time’, or counts the bars spread out along the stave in the score, musical qualities endure and grow in simple continuity, a whole symphony being present at any one point, just as a cell of an organism is what it is as expressive of the activity of the whole process of the life-system in a qualitatively distinctive function. The bell-chimes are clockwork, mechanism; the sounding tones interpenetrate, each expressive of a quality distinct from the others, each organically modified by its predecessors, and *modifying them in turn ‘as a new organisation of the whole’*.<sup>884</sup> The individual sensations ‘melt into one another’ informed and transformed by a qualitatively distinctive, emergent *gestalt*: a musical phrase, a rhythmic patterning emerging as a moving whole.<sup>885</sup>

Thus a musical model of time is presented to us by Bergson: a time in which not only is the past transformed in the light of future development, but in which the shape of that future development cannot be pre-determined by what has gone before, while growing organically from it.

As we learned in chapter four, the experiential richness of temporal duration is intrinsically unpredictable, for Bergson. Explanation in terms of final causes, however, always presupposes a goal to be arrived at through premeditated planning. Teleological planning has evolved with human beings as a requirement for successful adaptation to the obstacles inherent in our environment. We calculate our course through life by utilising what we find lying around us arbitrarily as means for projected ends. Teleological causality thus selectively adapts materials to suit our plans, and is not an appropriate framework for the consideration of genuine ontological creativity.

Bergson concludes, then, that there are two forms of experienced multiplicity: a homogeneous, spatialised time, and an ontologically more fundamental, organic duration, which is the experiential condition of the former. While the duration involves a mutual interpenetration of

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<sup>884</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 124.

<sup>885</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 127.



heterogeneous elements, spatialised time is merely ‘the extensive symbol of true duration’.<sup>886</sup> Spatialised time is the ‘clock-time’ in which the chiming of hours is considered in terms of identical units, as the sensation of chiming sound spatialised and translated into Kantian ‘intensive magnitudes’. To refer, as Kant does, to such ‘intensive magnitudes’ as themselves qualities, amounts to nothing more than a category mistake, a *metabasis eis allo genos*: the confusion of quality with quantity.

Samuel Alexander, in his *Space, Time and Deity*, analyses the nature of this ‘category mistake’ on Kant’s part. In delineating his own categorial scheme, Alexander points out that ‘quality’ cannot be included, since it is an ‘empirical generalisation’, or mere ‘collective name’ for all particular and heterogeneous qualities, and not a ‘pervasive determination’ of ‘Space-Time’.<sup>887</sup> Kant, as we have learned, also sought categories which condition the spatio-temporal forms of objective experience, but Alexander contends that qualities are irreducible to such quantifiable ‘complexes’:

It may be answered that everything possesses some quality or other, and therefore quality is categorial; everything is a complex of Space-Time and to complexity corresponds quality...But the objection does not hit the mark. Complexity in Space-Time makes everything a complex, but not a quality. It is specific sorts of complexes which are hard or sweet. Complexity as such is not a qualitative but a quantitative or purely spatio-temporal determination.<sup>888</sup>

Alexander cites the example of the quality of light. On his showing, light’s quantitative complexity is measurable in terms of wavelength-frequency, and a wavelength ‘is a quantity, not a quality’.<sup>889</sup> The colour red is a quality, and felt as such; but while we may measure wavelengths, we do not experience them: they form part of an abstract, scientific conceptual scheme, and are not feelings. Because all empirical things have qualities does not mean that quality is a category, or pervasive determination of empirical reality. A category is pervasive and homogenous; qualities may be pervasive but they are particular and heterogeneous. We may no more say that qualitateness is categorial than we may say that the property of all spatio-temporal things ‘being empirical’ is categorial, ‘for being empirical is only a collective generalisation of empirical things’:

In so far as everything is empirical it is not categorial. There is no category of empiricity which pervades all empirical things. There are only empirical things. In

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<sup>886</sup> Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, p. 128.

<sup>887</sup> Samuel Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1920) vol. 1, p. 326.

<sup>888</sup> Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity* vol. 1, p. 327.

<sup>889</sup> Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity* vol. 1, p. 327.

the same way there are red and sweet and life and mind; and these are qualities. But there is no universal, quality. Quality is therefore not categorial, but empirical.<sup>890</sup>

Alexander points to the same difficulty as Bergson, with reference to the Kantian ‘category mistake’ over quality:

Kant himself though he regarded quality as a category could only use it in experience, could only schematise it, in the form of intensive quantity, which is as good as saying that as quality it was useless as a category. The truth is, it is not a category at all.<sup>891</sup>

For Bergson, quality pertains to human beings so far as they endure, and thus in so far as they are free. Categories mark out necessary features of possible empirical experience. Duration is qualitative, organic growth, it is purposive and indeterminate, leading towards an unforeseeable future. It is thus not teleological in the Kantian sense of temporal predictability, as there is no pre-determination of the future. Durational life is creative of genuine novelty, the future is open-ended. Later in this thesis we shall see important theological consequences of thinking of human existential purpose, in relation to Kierkegaardian faith, in terms of durational freedom rather than pre-determining teleology.<sup>892</sup>

On the basis of his criticism of Kant’s account of intensive magnitude, Bergson relativises Kant’s transcendental deduction by showing that the spatialised time on which empirical knowledge depends is itself conditioned by an organic conception of duration, which is to say that Bergson grants epistemological priority to Kantian aesthetically reflective conceptuality over empirical conceptual determination. Kantian empirical knowledge is thus re-situated in a wider, aesthetically re-conceived and open-ended temporality by Bergson.

In this thesis I am concerned with the possibility of a theological account of time that accords with the paradoxicality of the revelation of salvation in Christ, as Kierkegaard understands it. Such an account, given what we have just learned about their intrinsic calculability, will eschew Kantian teleological approaches, such as are found in post-Kantian systematic accounts. A conceptually paradoxical, or non-teleological eschatology might however derive insight from Bergson’s durational account of the qualitative unpredictability of the future. Considered in such terms, the eschaton would remain a conceptually incalculable revelation, to be approached

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<sup>890</sup> Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, vol. 1, p. 327.

<sup>891</sup> Alexander, *Space, Time and Deity*, vol. 1, p. 328.

<sup>892</sup> This stress on human existential purpose is not to suggest that, for Bergson, empirical objects in space do not also endure. He believes that there are multiple durations, albeit at lesser ‘tensions’ than human duration, since objects only tend towards spatiality, they are never as fully spatialised as our knowledge frame construes them for practical ends. Bergson’s durational *élan* is a cosmic, dynamic ground, and not only the form of human existence. But material things are in various degrees of ‘detension’, as we saw in the last chapter. The durational ‘tension’ of human mind is unique (at least on the basis of available evidence about the universe: Bergson’s is, after all, an inductive metaphysic).

on the basis of faith in Christ's saving judgement on all our pre-conceptions and self-understandings.



## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Analysis of the Structure and Role of Kantian Transcendental Imagination in the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories**

In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, according to Kant's first-edition version of the Transcendental Deduction<sup>893</sup>, it is held that objective experience is made possible by means of a threefold synthesis of apprehension, reproduction, and recognition. Kant assigns these moments of one overarching synthetic activity to sense, imagination and conceptuality respectively. But all synthesis is the work of imagination. The three 'moments' of imaginative synthesis are in fact different aspects of the one, imaginative activity<sup>894</sup>, the focus varying to show imaginative activity as it bears in one respect on sensibility, and in another, on the understanding. I will show that imagination, in one unifying activity, manifests itself in relation both to sensory and conceptual elements in possible cognition.

Imagination makes present what is absent: it is 'the faculty for representing an object even without its presence in intuition'<sup>895</sup>. The synthesis of apprehension is the unification of the manifold in inner sense. The manifold of representations is a mere unconnected multitude, or synopsis, without imaginative synthetic activity<sup>896</sup>. Inner sense, in which all representations, inner and outer come to pass, is time. To combine the synopsis of inner sense into a temporal synthesis is the work of imagination, as the faculty of making present what is absent: past moments are successively retained and future ones anticipated in imaginative temporal combination<sup>897</sup>. The activity of imagination makes possible an intuition or apprehension of temporal continuity, thus enabling a formal intuition of time (as opposed to which all reference to time as a form of intuition is a mere abstraction<sup>898</sup>).

Kant's analysis of the threefold synthesis, in distinguishing different relations of the one imaginative activity in regard to sense on the one hand, and understanding on the other, shows the role of imagination in enabling sensible apprehension. From the above discussion, it has become clear that in its pure passivity, sensory receptivity is not sufficient for perception. While in general in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant regards sensibility as the mode of the mind's receptivity, he realises that this needs qualification, and his account of the role of imagination in the synthesis of apprehension illustrates that there is an active element in the mind that is not itself conceptual: the imagination. Given a division of the mind into sensibility and

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<sup>893</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A94-110.

<sup>894</sup> H. J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*, vol. I, p. 376.

<sup>895</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B151.

<sup>896</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* vol. I, pp. 360-1; Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A98.

<sup>897</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A102.

<sup>898</sup> Paton, *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience* vol. I, p. 359.

understanding, one would think that Kant held to a straightforward distinction between active and passive aspects of cognition. However, Kant was heir to a long philosophical tradition of thinking about the imagination as a mediating power (see appendix two).<sup>899</sup> In his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, (1798b)<sup>900</sup>, Kant codified his earlier thinking on the imagination as found in his Critiques of Pure Reason and of the Power of Judgement. Kant distinguishes sensibility into imaginative-active and sensory-passive components. Sense is defined as the ‘faculty of intuition in the presence of an object’, and therefore a purely passive receptivity, while imagination is conceived as ‘the faculty of intuition without the presence of an object (echoing the description of imagination given in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, at B151, as discussed above). Against the activity of the conceptual faculty, therefore, there is juxtaposed not only the passivity of sense, but also a power of sensible intuition that was not, however, dependent on the presence of an object for the production of images. As empirical imagination, this latter intuitive power is able to recall and anticipate past and future representations in their absence, but only on the basis of the former actual presence of objects of experience. In conjunction with the understanding, empirical imagination makes memory and ‘prevision’ or foresight possible. But to make such empirical reproduction of past experience possible, the synopsis of the sensory manifold must be gathered together in an apprehension of sequence, as a formal intuition in inner sense, as discussed above. For this role, imagination can obviously not be dependent on any former experience, since the production of a content-rich, temporal intuition is a transcendental condition of any possible experience. Kant thus distinguishes a productive imaginative capacity from that of empirical imagination. By virtue of its creative, transcendental role, the productive imagination is the same power that works unconsciously to guide aesthetic production in works of genius. I will discuss this aesthetic aspect of the productive imagination below. The point to be grasped here is that Kant distinguishes between empirical image-production and an interpretive, synthetic activity assigned to the productive imagination. Productive, or transcendental imagination gives a temporal interpretation to the synopsis of the manifold in inner sense, allowing an awareness of formal intuition of the manifold as contained in the form of intuition (this form of inner sense being, in itself, merely an abstraction for the purposes of analysis as stated earlier). It is the productive imagination that occupies Kant’s thought, in its epistemological and aesthetic bearings, respectively, in the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of the Power of Judgement*.

In the apprehensive synthesis that has been under discussion, imagination creates the formal intuition of time through a synthesis of pure reproduction<sup>901</sup>: the second analytical moment that

<sup>899</sup> Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, p. 246.

<sup>900</sup> Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, (§ 15), see Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 247-8.

<sup>901</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A102.

Kant focuses on in his treatment of the ‘threefold synthesis’. It will emerge that the synthesis of apprehension intrinsically involves the synthesis of reproduction, reinforcing the view that the threefold synthesis is in fact the analysis of different aspects of the one work of productive or transcendental imagination. Kant identifies the productive imagination as responsible for all synthetic activity: ‘synthesis in general is...the mere effect of the imagination, of a blind though indispensable function of the soul without which we would have no cognition at all, but of which we are seldom even conscious’.<sup>902</sup>

Imagination is specifically assigned the role of pure reproduction<sup>903</sup> of the sensory manifold in Kant’s account of the threefold synthesis. From this we can gather that sensible apprehension, as imaginatively enabled, must involve the production of temporal consciousness by the arranging and retaining of the individual appearances of the manifold in necessary sequential relations through imaginative synthetic activity. The reproductive synthesis enables a formal intuition of the temporal manifold, or in other words, it enables awareness of inner sense. Therefore this imaginative activity is pure, not empirical: this activity is the work of the transcendental imagination, and the ground of any possible empirical imaginative connection through mere association, with which it must not be confused. As enabling, or constituting a formal intuition of objective temporal sequence, Kant also refers to the activity of the pure, transcendental imagination as productive. But this does not contradict passages in which he shows that *a priori* imaginative synthesis proceeds reproductively. The production by transcendental imagination of a formal intuition of time proceeds through imaginative reproduction: reproductive anticipation and retention in the present of future and past moments is the nature of the transcendental imaginative production of a formal intuition of time, since imagination is a faculty of making present what is absent.

The third moment of imaginative synthesis concerns the involvement of pure conceptual components in the transcendental possibility of objective experience<sup>904</sup>. The sequence of representations referred to, in the last paragraph, as an imaginatively construed arrangement, or temporal interpretation, must be a necessary ordering, in order to be an objective consciousness of time, as opposed to a subjective impression, which can be either slow or rapid, depending on emotional and other, accidental, considerations. Only a rule bound sequence can have this required objectivity, free from all arbitrary subjective considerations. The understanding, as a faculty of concepts, is a faculty of rules. A necessary sequence is brought to bear on imaginative temporal synthesis through the combination of successive moments in accordance with a single plan. The single plan gives unity to the temporal synthesis, and its temporal shape is expressed

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<sup>902</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A78.

<sup>903</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A101-102.

<sup>904</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A103-110.

in transcendental concepts. The unity that comes to expression in judgement is grounded in transcendental subjectivity, (as already discussed in some detail in the first chapter). Transcendental subjectivity, as the self-awareness that must in principle be able to accompany all objective experience<sup>905</sup>, is the unity of consciousness, manifest in acts of objective judgement, which is a correlate of and requirement for experiential objectivity; an objectivity conceived as the conceptually structured unity of the formal intuition of a temporal manifold, as transcendental concepts are brought to bear in judgement through imaginative synthesis.

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<sup>905</sup> Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B132.





## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Plato, Aristotle & Coleridgean Meontology**

What I offer here is meant to provide a background to my interpretation of Coleridge in chapters six and seven. In what follows I am indebted to Frederick Copleston's readings of Plato, Plotinus and Aristotle.<sup>906</sup> This hermeneutical contextualisation relates as much to the ancient conceptualities on which so much in Coleridge's thought depends, as to the guiding presuppositions of his thinking, and the flaws which I have been led to detect in these.

It has emerges through the last two chapters that I hold the genuineness of any given metaphysical insight of Coleridge's to be assessable according to the extent to which he does *not* achieve a fully-rounded, systematic completeness of form in its presentation. I shall now explain why.

#### **(1) Teleological time versus the process of transcendent aesthetic intimation.**

One of the claims developed through this thesis is that a connecting link between romanticism and existentialism, between Coleridge and Kierkegaard, is just this sense of a more-than-empirical, but less than complete *intimation* of a fullness of metaphysical or theological significance. I would suggest that any truly romantic or existential 'metaphysic' – whatever other differences there may be – is a metaphysic which always remains a perspective: an aesthetically grasped or conceptually indeterminate intimation of wholeness. I suggest further that the confidence with which such self-confessedly tentative or *temporary* positions are put forward discloses a crucial awareness of the centrality of *time* in conditioning human experience. As we exist, time is both our limitation and our field of possibility. This temporal dimension will be important to bear in mind in reading the next chapter, as my argument will be found to hinge on the distinction between a qualitatively evolving 'lived time', that we have already learned about from Bergson, and a mode of *a priori* systematic philosophical thought working to a pre-set schedule in the form of a *teleological trajectory*: a discontinuous, since essentially *spatial*, reconstruction of time for the sake of its calculative usefulness for explanatory completeness.

I have claimed that Coleridge, as a *poet*, and in aesthetic contemplation, achieves the kind of metaphysical vision I have been speaking of: the partial vision or intimation of an overarching context of creativity over and above, yet pulsing through, the empirically mechanical order. Coleridge entertained such a vision in poetic receptivity, but could not grasp it as a possession,

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<sup>906</sup> Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, pp. 166, 190-1, 292-3, 469-70.

or absolute purchase-point: the impossible ‘view from nowhere’ claimed to have been achieved by Hegel, as we saw earlier. Moreover, I suggest that Coleridge the *philosopher* had this same vision before him. As primarily a creative thinker, he worked on the basis of a guiding intimation of the result at which he aimed., as afforded to him aesthetically But this imaginative insight could not survive his attempt to reduce it, *schematically and teleologically*, to the strictly objective terms of *a priori* conceptual determination.

I interpret Coleridge in the last two chapters as a thinker who spent his activity as an *a priori* systematician vainly trying to play ‘catch-up’ with his aesthetically indeterminate vision. But nevertheless, even if he did fail as a systemtician, Coleridge never shied away from, or attempted to fudge his conceptual dilemmas. He remained as true to his faith in personal freedom as to his belief in the power of philosophy to accommodate this commitment, but I suggest that the conceptual resources available to him necessarily led – albeit unintentionally – to a compromised presentation of his Christian faith. I shall be arguing, in short, that the very systematicity of Coleridge’s thinking is structurally inappropriate to the theological ends to which it is directed and set in motion by the living unison of his faith and his poetic vision.

I suggest that this theoretical impasse is fundamentally rooted in the question of *time*. Coleridge is, perhaps unwittingly, torn between the two temporalities I have drawn attention to above, and that fissure is pregnant with others. It gives birth to the theoretical chasm that he experiences in trying to reconcile his Christian faith with his poetic vision. While both these were organically linked in his life, Coleridge struggled to formalise their dynamic inter-play in philosophical terms, owing to his repeated attempts to translate or schematise an *aesthetically dynamic and evolving* vision into objectively systematic *teleology*.

My argument in the last two chapters, informed by my reading of Kierkegaard earlier in this thesis, is based on the notion that by pre-setting a theoretical agenda, Coleridge tries to pin down the living, creative processes in nature; processes that are for him intimative of divinity as the manifestation of the supra-natural through the natural. But Coleridge tries to plot this creativity on a *spatialised* map through the use of dialectical logic. Because of this, he works with a teleological plan, involving the *projection* of a threefold pattern or schematic template of ‘development’ that cannot evolve qualitatively, being, by its very nature, a schema quantifiable or calculable in advance. Thus in chapter seven I argue that Coleridge’s philosophically systematic thinking could not truly be reconciled with his faith, as a faith in human freedom in relation to the unpredictably spontaneous love of a personal God.

## (2) Coleridge and meontological dialectics

I will now introduce important background information regarding some key metaphysical tenets of ancient thought that form the basis of Coleridge's approach in important areas of his philosophy.

These aspects concern two contrasting dialectical treatments of the relation of matter to form. The thinkers in question are Plato and Aristotle. With regard to the former,<sup>907</sup> Platonic ontology forms the implicit subtext of much of the philosophical translation of Coleridge's vision. I shall argue that this amounts to a mistranslation. Coleridge attempts to rectify the problems caused by this mistranslation of his poetic insight through attention to the themes of actuality, potency and potentiality. He does so through an application of principles that derive ultimately from Aristotle; (Coleridge's treatment here is influenced by the theosophy of Jacob Boehme, and is thus related to the thought of the later Schelling).<sup>908</sup> I argue that this foray into *meontology* does no mend matters either in systematic-theological or philosophical terms, since the matrices from which the various strands of his thinking are drawn – whether Platonic or Aristotlean – share in the fundamental assumption of just that spatialised temporality that has been noted immediately above and earlier on in relation to Henri Bergson. This implicit assumption has therefore an ancient pedigree, although it is first made explicit and 'transcendentalised' in Kant's treatment of imaginative schematism: an important theme, also addressed in earlier chapters, that recurs in the Coleridgean context, as I understand it.

Aristotle, as Plato's former student, approached his own thinking in the light of Plato's ontological doctrine, as its constructive and radical critic. The simplest overarching way to describe the difference between Plato's and Aristotle's thought over the issue of matter and form is to suggest that while Plato looks to transcendent explanations – shapings of matter from a superior realm of being – Aristotle holds that the organising principle of any empirical being is inseparable from it.

Epistemological and ontological themes are intermeshed in Plato's work, making it hard to analyse them independently. I suggest that this is because, unlike Kant, Plato is not concerned with how we come to know, or with the conditions of possible knowledge, but rather with ascertaining the correct object of true knowledge, as distinguished from what passes as such on the basis of common experience, which he dismisses as mere opinion. The true object of

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<sup>907</sup> See Plato, *Republic*, G. M. A. Grubbe, rev. C. D. C. Reeve (tr.) (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 971-1224; *Timaeus*, Donald J. Zeyl (tr.) (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), pp. 1224-1292.

<sup>908</sup> Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*; 'Of the first principle of the divine essence', in Robin Waterfield (ed. & tr.), *Western Esoteric Masters Series: Jacob Boehme*, (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2001), pp. 82-7.

knowledge is found to be the central feature of Plato's metaphysics: transcendent forms or ideas. So far from ruling out the possibility of transcendent knowledge, Plato makes these ideal 'thought-entities', and above all, their source – the form or idea of Goodness – the criteria by which truth and falsehood in the empirical world are measured. Plato gives his epistemological question a metaphysical answer.

Plato regards truth as eternally unchanging. Our knowledge is true to the extent that it corresponds with transcendent forms or ideas. Mind is not primarily located within human beings, but is equated with divinity as the intelligible principle in all that can be said to exist. Reason, as the intelligible principle is equated with true being – that which necessarily is – thus all that exists must to some extent participate in reason or true being. Being is divine. Gods participate in being more than humans, therefore gods are more divine than humans, although humans possess a spark of divinity, their eternal soul. As participating in universal reason, people are immortal; as participating in the material realm of change and becoming – as bodies – they are mortal: they grow and decline. But what is rational cannot not be. What is material only participates in reason, and therefore changes state constantly. Movement is thus inferior to stasis. Mind, to the extent that it is rational is non-material; logical truths are incontrovertible, they eternally are, and as such are hypostatized by Plato as eternal Forms of the finite things that participate in them, in the same relation that shadows bear to the bodies which *inform* them as their silhouetted images. In fact, one might say that the Ideal forms of things are information. To express Plato's contention in twenty-first century terms, one might think of eternal ideas as 'programmes' or 'software'.

But this analogy must be carefully qualified, because the 'software' in question, unlike a computer programme, is also responsible for the existence of the hardware which it informs. While matter for Plato is a co-eternal principle alongside form (or 'the forms'), in itself it has no inherent identity. For matter to participate in true being it must be rationally informed, enabling it to manifest coherent structure, a viable order. Ontological participation is a communication of the structuring conditions which shape matter (in itself mere privation of being) into contingent beings. But to the extent that ideally derived beings also participate in matter, they can also cease to be, since the principle of their being is not intrinsic. The identity of a rock, for example, is merely borrowed on a temporary basis. And yet, in the language of the early nineteenth century thought with which we are much concerned in this thesis, it could be said that matter and form are in polarity with one another, since each requires the other to be what it is. While Plato never argues that matter and form are in differentiated identity, as did Schelling for example ('mind is visible matter, matter invisible mind'), he does posit their co-eternity. Forms create the structures whereby matter is transiently stabilised, but do not create matter itself.

Here Platonism crucially differs from Christianity, and this should forewarn us that Coleridge's admiration for Platonism (especially in its Neo-platonic, Plotinian variant) might cause problems in relation to his theological aims. Christianity follows *Genesis* in holding the very materiality of the world to be good, whereas Plato in the *Timaeus* regards it merely negatively, as an inevitable chaos which must be informed in order for there to be a Cosmos.

Movement, as we have seen, is a decline from true, eternal form for Plato. The material conditions of space and time are thus seen as ontologically deficient. Here again, Coleridge can be criticised for what I shall be arguing is his over-hasty tendency to elide Platonic and Christian conceptualities. For Plato, the realm of becoming can only haltingly imitate eternally unmoving truth. In his *Republic*, Plato has epistemology and ontology coincide in the form of the Good, as mentioned above. This is seen as a divine perfection of being, the truth in itself, which is independent of all conditioning as eternally self-existent, the criterion of all being and knowledge. Temporal process is merely the 'moving image of eternity' (*Timaeus*), and as less than fully real, is the condition of our mistakes and illusions about truth. Time is a veil hiding us from the truth of our own eternal natures as rational souls. But the immortality of the soul is not a Christian doctrine. Resurrection is the teaching at the heart of Christianity as the ultimate revelation of saving truth; the revelation of a divine transformation of human life that stops all speculation, Platonic or otherwise, dead in its tracks. Resurrection is a dynamic event, a challenge to our logic, or as Bonhoeffer calls it, a revealed 'counter-Logos' beyond our conceptual control. I shall argue that precisely such a Platonic tendency to devalue temporal process is deeply ingrained in Coleridge's formal philosophical thinking. This is coupled with a related Kantian teleological approach that (as we learned from Bergson) tends to reduce the experienced flow of time to a skeletal or 'spatialised' schema. I shall argue that these related Platonic and Kantian trends as regards the nature and value of temporality radically compromise Coleridge's attempt to reconcile the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of his Christian experience.

We have seen that Plato answered his question concerning the true object of knowledge in terms of transcendent exemplars of which things are copies, and that this proposal leads to a devaluation of the world of becoming. Aristotle objected that postulating another world does not answer any causal questions concerning this one. Plato simply doubles the initial problem according to Aristotle; instead of just the one world for which an account must be found, another is postulated on top of this, with no more enlightenment as to the cause of the latter than of the former. Whatever the justice of this and other related arguments to be found in Aristotle's

*Metaphysics*,<sup>909</sup> his dissatisfaction with Plato's theory of Ideas led him to postulate his own, fourfold theory of causality,<sup>910</sup> central to which is the notion of *immanent form*: the inherence in a substance of a necessary essential element, which unlike merely contingent or 'accidental' forms (such as hair colour, eye colour, etc.), determines that substance's identity in terms of a delimiting and thus objective definition of the kind of being in question, in terms of species and genus. Since on the other hand Aristotle claimed that the term substantiality in its primary sense can only be applied to independently existing individuals, such general and specific definition would need to include not only the necessary formal or informing structural characteristics present in an individual being, but also that which limits its existence in a negative sense. Matter as well as form must be a component of an Aristotelian essence, since formal, universal structural features are only extant in numerically particular and contingent, empirical beings. Thus the theory of immanent form demanded from Aristotle a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the concept of matter than that provided by Plato.

Plato, in his *Timaeus*, suggests that physical objects originate in terms of a combination of 'intelligent' or purposive and 'necessary' causes. While the former display intention determining something according to a structural plan or design, the latter are described by Plato as 'errant' or 'indeterminate' causes. Plato works with a conception of necessity that embraces the notions of chance and accident. What he primarily means by necessary or errant causation is thus a development which is blind: unintentional insofar as it is in accordance with no intelligent plan, and (literally, in the original Greek) 'wandering' as undetermined or undirected. On its own, without formal input, necessary causation is not akin to the determinations of modern empirical science, but as connoting themes such as randomness, necessity is regarded as no more than chaotic. In the combination of necessity and intelligently informed processes that is the spatio-temporal world, necessity is identifiable with the traditional Greek concept of *'αναγκη (ananke)* or fate.

Regarded as fate, Plato's concept of blind material necessity is shown to be still close to mythological forms of explanation. Aristotle needed to develop the concept of matter to the extent that he could provide a reasoned account of the persistence of formal features through *change*. The forms, as no longer regarded as transcendent, indwell material substrates which is characterised as primarily passive. Matter is the medium through which form is realised

<sup>909</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, §§ 990a; 990b; 991a; 997b.

<sup>910</sup> The complete causal account of anything consists of four factors for Aristotle. Causality is regarded: (1) in terms of efficiency or the interaction of dynamic changes in space and time (e.g. factors such as physical impacts); (2) in terms of finality or teleologically oriented structural development (e.g. growth); (3) in terms of material substrate or that through which a persisting developmental process is realised (e.g. Gold is the matter in which a ring is fashioned, while a particular state of one of the four cardinal elements is the matter for gold); (4) in terms of formal causality, or the determining universal structural features that come to realisation through the material cause (as in 3), in accordance with a final objective (as in 2), and by the instrumentality of some natural or human agency (as in 1).

gradually, it is thus also, and dialectically, that which retards the development of form. Form is actual only in series, only through time, and is never wholly present, but is always either growing or declining. Change in formal state is mediated by matter, which regarded in itself (*proton hyle; prima materia*) is no more than the possibility of formal realisation, although (and again dialectically) by thus mediating processive actualisation, matter is also that which inhibits pure actuality, which in itself must be regarded as timeless. The power to become is therefore also a privation of fullness of being. Aristotle's forms are thus enmeshed in a dynamic interplay of actuality and a potentiality which is both potency for being and privation of being. Prime matter, as already indicated, is without any determinate features. As privation of being it is not *anything*, while as the power of becoming it is not literally nothing, or nothing absolutely. Material 'non-being' is rather in a dialectical relationship with actual being. As potency or power of being it is real, but not actual, it is not nothing, but also not actual: matter is potential, the power to actualise form. It therefore emerges that there are three key ontological distinctions in such a doctrine of relative non-being two of these, the distinctions of *actuality* and *possibility* are coordinate, and both are embraced by the overarching concept of *reality*. As not absolutely nothing, potentiality is *real* – a power of being – but it is real only as the *possibility* of an *actual* finite being. Only the logically *impossible* could be regarded as absolutely unreal.

The Greek language usefully distinguishes between relative non-being, or potentiality (*με 'ov /me on*), and absolute non-being (*ουκ 'ov /ouk on*). The former term gives rise to *meontology* as the study of relative – or as Paul Tillich describes it – 'dialectical' non-being. Here we confront an issue that is at the heart of this thesis, having special application to the different understandings of dialectical thought displayed in the work of Coleridge on the one hand and Kierkegaard on the other.

Two senses of the term 'dialectical' that have been brought into play in this thesis. In chapter one, we discovered Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegelian dialectic as in a sense no more than a conceptual sleight of hand. Hegel claims that opposite polarities, such as subjectivity and objectivity, activity and passivity, freedom and determination, are intrinsically related to each other. The significance of any one member of such pairs of terms is said to be conceptually dependent on its polar counterpart. Hegel seeks to solve theoretical impasses between each pair of such terms by the strategy of 'sublation', as we saw. The inner relationship – the dialectic – pertaining between pairs of opposites is said to be productive. Hegel's claim is therefore that abstract conceptual relationships are themselves possessed of real power (thus harmonising the polarities of real and ideal, subjective and objective). It is Hegel's contention that the dynamic changes (e.g. necessary efficient causality on the one hand, and free human volition on the other) met with and lived through in ordinary experience are rooted in a deeper creative



activity: an activity of reason, conceived as a self-realising dynamism, realising its own latent power, unfolding its potential for polar conceptual structure teleologically through the inner movements of antithetical concepts as they surmount their differences in synthesis. Each dialectical concept is seen as fulfilled by its antithesis, each seen as in some sense needing the other for its own completion. Kierkegaard's point is that Hegel illicitly borrows from the reality of human striving – which takes place in and is only known through finite existence – in order to 'animate' mere thoughts. In an anthropomorphic move, the human activity of thinking – a property of persons – is seen as creative of those very persons and the universe in which they are dependently situated. People's thoughts are personified as actualisers of the people who think them, as themselves possessed of volition and dynamic drive.

We have learned that Aristotle's concept of relative non-being is dialectical in a different sense from the Hegelian. Matter is regarded by Aristotle as potentiality for form, and as such, *both* an active potency *and* a passive receptivity to formal actualisation. The inner relationship between the two aspects which interact in the Aristotelian concept of potentiality – both potency and receptive possibility – can be seen to be logically related to one another, but this dialectical relationship cannot itself be the object of a conceptually necessary or determinate judgement. Hegel's claim is to have utilised a deeper form of logic – a triadic logic – over and above the common and dualistic, 'subject-predicate' logic of Aristotle (*Verstand*), as pertaining to reason in a more creative and encompassing sense (*Vernunft*). But I shall argue in the next chapter that Coleridge's utilisation of a similar triadic dialectic is precisely the problem with his systematic work, theologically speaking. I suggest that the *calculability*, the *mechanistic instrumentality* of such a 'higher logic', *as a necessarily determinable, infinitely iterable threefold process of thought* is at the root of Kierkegaard's objection, in the light of personal divine revelation, to any theological use of objective metaphysical thinking in Christian theology.

Kierkegaard's faith is in a Christ whose self-sacrificial offer of salvation is as literally incalculable to human knowledge as it is to human standards of moral value. It is *because* we are in need of salvation that our corrupted, self-centring understanding cannot regard that salvation as anything other than logically impossible. As we argued in chapter one, Kierkegaard can be read as suggesting a suspension or 'captivity' of the understanding – not its annihilation, but its imaginatively or indeterminately mediated receptivity to an incalculable revelation beyond all human judgement. This imaginative effort, sustaining an interpretively productive tension between the calculable and the incalculable, is an extreme example of the same willingness to perceive a tensional, non-determinable intrinsic relationship that is displayed in the dialectical structure – the unity of difference – of Aristotle's model of potentiality as an active power that is also a possible receptivity.

Coleridge attempts to underpin his metaphysics with meontological thinking, in order to safeguard both human and divine personal freedom. However Coleridge's use of the concept of relative non-being has more in common with Hegelian dialectical determination than with the aesthetic apprehension of unities through imaginative tension, the effort of receptive attentiveness that is manifest and communicable through his poetry, as shown in chapter seven. At bottom, it is this attempt to make the logically calculable stand in for the aesthetically indeterminable (as I argue in chapter six), that is the cause of the problematic nature of Coleridge's systematic philosophical theology.